

Chronicles

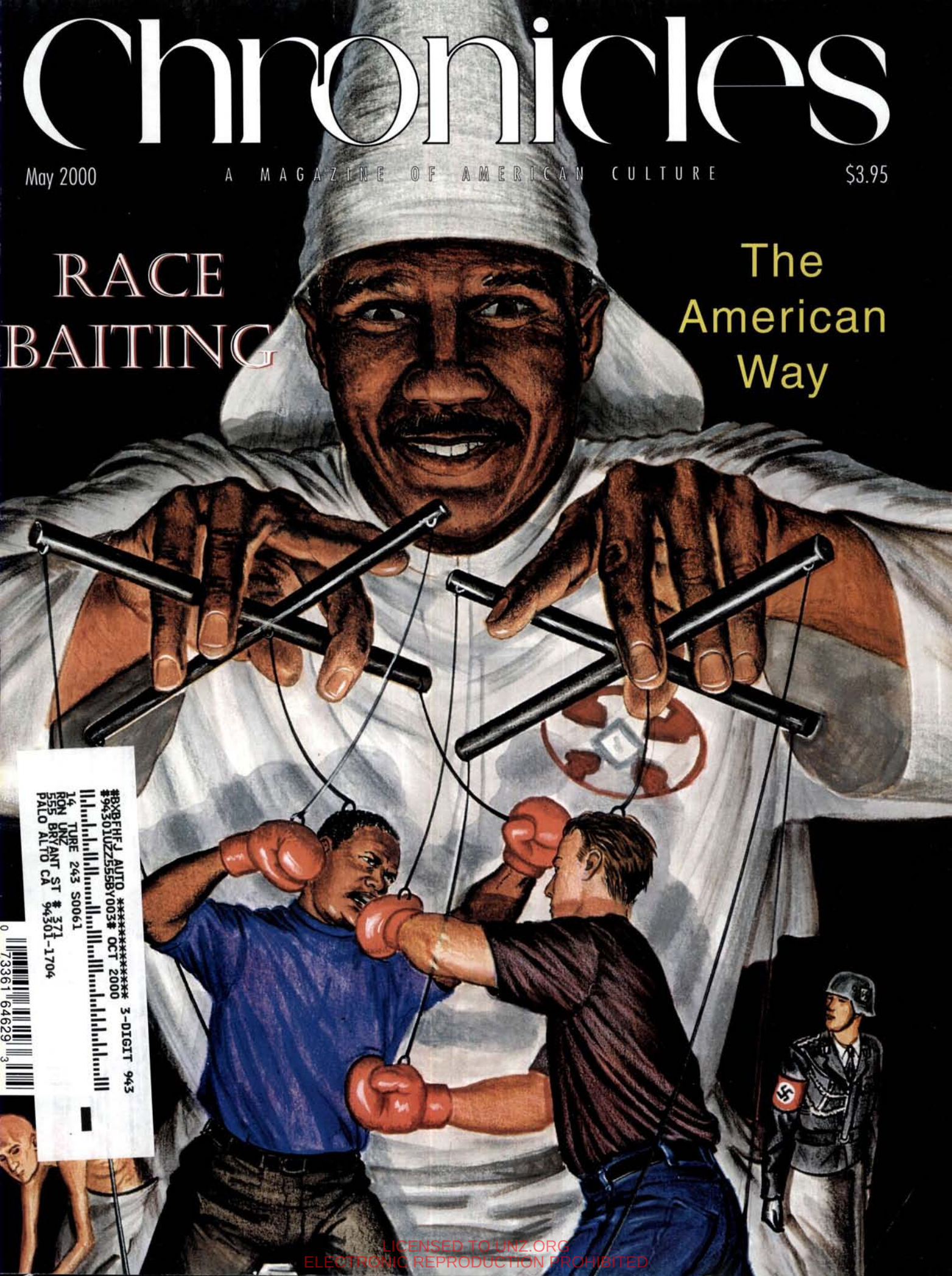
May 2000

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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RACE BAITING

The American Way

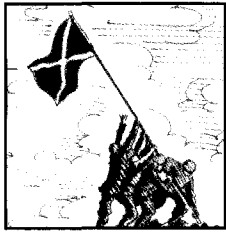


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Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE



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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

For several years, *Chronicles* has grappled forthrightly with issues of race and racial division in the United States. For this, we have been attacked by leftist race baiters, including Jesse Jackson, former Illinois Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, and even First Lady Hillary Clinton. But all of the attacks haven't come from the left. The letters below are a sampling of criticism that we have received in recent months. They have been edited only for length.

On *Chronicles* and Race

It is with sadness that I must inform you that I will not be renewing my subscription . . . the next time around.

I was severely disappointed in the Thomas Fleming article "X2K: *aut Christus aut nihil*," in the December 1999 issue. This is the second major disappointment I have experienced in an article by Thomas Fleming, in the last several years.

If Christianity will not allow for the maintenance of the historical, racial, demographic makeup of the American nation, then, as Mr. Fleming notes, I will choose, what he refers to as, the "racialist" position.

However, I do not believe that Christianity demands one give up the ethnic/racial makeup of ones [sic] nation. And, I am, therefore, very disappointed in Mr. Fleming's attitude on this subject.

For a number of years, *Chronicles* has been my favorite periodical. And, it will be missed.

—Kenneth P. Stoeckmann, Jr.
Murrieta, CA

Why is Tom Fleming using his *Perspective* essays (December 1999 and January 2000) to attack racialist straw men? After earlier castigating paleolibertarians, has he turned his sights on those who are willing to look at racial issues openly? While it may be true that some racialists think that race is "the whole ball of wax," and others may "watch reruns of Conan the Barbarian," is this a fair categorization? The topic is too important to be dismissed so summarily. Perhaps Tom Fleming could show his good intent if he were to review Michael Levin's book, *Why Race Matters*?

—Fred Birnbaum
Charlotte, NC

Several years ago you demanded that the University of Colorado at Boulder should [sic] fire Martha Nussbaum for having prostituted her position in changing a

specific text of Plato so that it would not criticize sodomy. I think that you yourself have prostituted your position as editor of *Chronicles* for publishing Bolshevik/Zionist/Polish lies that the Germans gassed Jews in gaschambers, whether or not you yourself are the pseudonym, "Humpdy [sic] Dumpty." Both [sic] Fred Leuschter's samples from the "gaschambers" of Majdenik, Treblinka, and Auschwitz only contained minute traces of potassium cyanide. The Jew [sic] head of the Auschwitz museum and the Polish government subsequently did their own analyses of the "gaschamber"—you like quotation marks—at Auschwitz and came up with the same conclusions: only minute traces of potassium cyanide. If the Germans had gassed 2 million Jews in this "gaschamber," there should have been great quantities of potassium cyanide to the point of covering the walls with "prussian [sic] blue," according to Gernar Rudolf. The obvious conclusion is that the Germans did not gas 2 million Jews at Auschwitz. Subsequently, investigators in Moscow located several volumes of the German "books of the dead" that listed some 79,000 dead inmates and their reason for dying: Most died of Typhoid [sic] fever, although some were executed. Should not these "books of the dead" have listed millions of Jews having died in the "gaschamber?"

Although Communists and Jews want to continue the myth of the "six million" for political reasons namely to blame the political right, it disturbs me to find intellectuals on the right, such as yourself, Mr. Fleming, for [sic] continuing this myth in the service of various Slavic nationalisms, now Serb, now Czech, now Polish. When your political associations consist of anti-Germans: Dr. Trifkovic, Sir Alfred Sherman, Dr. Stenton, you can only lend yourself to anti-German propaganda. (I have no doubt but that one of the British institutions that you teach in your summer program of America's British political institutions include [sic] British anti-German propaganda.)

Several years ago, Mr. Fleming, you

related to your readers the story about the Serb hospital for the insane where journalists said that the Serb doctors had abandoned their Muslim patients to the ravages of war. But that one investigator was brave enough to investigate this story himself, finding that in fact the Serb doctors had braved the frontlines of war and remained to care for their patients, including Muslims. Your sententium [sic] was that Western journalists, when the truth is not to their political liking, will print the myth. Unfortunately, Mr. Fleming, you too are one Western journalist who when faced with the truth that is not to your Political [sic] liking, i.e. politically incorrect, you too will print the myth. David Irving, no doubt a favorite historian of yours, has said that anyone who maintains the myth of German "gaschambers" is "incorrigible." Isn't in-

corrigibility another one of your "infantile disorders?"

I want to say too that by Propagating [sic] the Polish/Bolshevik/Zionist lie of the German gaschambers, you are promoting the present German government which you and your political associates hate so much. This German government penalizes Germans and other nationalities who discount this lie, putting such people like [sic] Frank Toben, an Austalian [sic] into prison, and seeking the extradition of the above mentioned Germar Rudolf from England. Thomas Fleming, you are helping your friends at the ADL and the German regime to quash freedom of speech and nation state. Perhaps it would be ironic if the truth about Germany's treatment of Jews and other people, and the truth about the Nuremberg trials and Eisenhower's ful-

filling of the "Morgenthau Plan" would propel the German Republicans to political power and severely destabilize this German regime and its plans to rule Europe. Perhaps if *Chronicles* promoted the truth rather than the chains of the left that shackle the minds of Germans, anti-Germans would be sending the train to Berlin carrying the virus of its destruction, just as the Germans sent the train carrying Lenin to St. Petersburg.

Oh I wanted to tell you too that in your forward to Dr. Trifkovic's book, you forgot to put quotation marks around Croatian Atrocities [sic] the way you put them around Polish atrocities. All things being equal.

—Luke Eckrich
Cloverdale, IN

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

AL GORE and George W. Bush have a lot in common: They're both spoiled rich boys and sons of famous politicians; both are party animals. I thought it could not get any worse, but I was wrong. The first rule of American politics is that it can always get worse and usually does.

Both Gore and Bush were challenged by the left wings of their parties: Gore, by Mr. Basketball Jones himself, Bill Bradley, who wanted to put his personal race obsession at the top of the American agenda and to socialize whatever sectors of economic life were still in private hands; Bush, by the reform-minded friend of Charles Keating and Joe Bonnano, a divorced philanderer who offered himself as the moral alternative to Bill Clinton.

John McCain's worst liability was not his smarmy hypocrisy—he is, after all, a member of Congress—but his megalomaniac foreign policy: Crank up the war machines, arm the Muslims against the Christians, destabilize Russia.

As if to prove just how unstable he is, McCain not only campaigned for the Democratic vote—against his own party—but at a key point in his campaign, he denounced the so-called Religious Right, which is his party's core. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson deserve criticism for the Christian Coalition's suicidal support for Bush senior and Bob Dole, but a primary campaign is not the proper occasion for a self-criticism session. Whatever else it may have accomplished, Mc-

Cain's candidacy will certainly strengthen the influence of the Christian right over the GOP, and it may even cost George W. Bush the election.

In the end, nearly every state outside the regional lunatic asylum known as New England went for Bush. In fact, the Bush people should not have worried about McCain: Once Bill Kristol and Co. decided to back the Arizona senator, Bush was a sure thing. In an hilarious attempt to reinvent the candidate, the editors of the *Weekly Standard* portrayed the aging and grumpy liberal as a dynamic populist outsider who was "taking on the GOP establishment. . . . [He] makes the corporate and lobbyist types nervous." About what—that he might want to squeeze more out of them?

Mr. Kristol has a perfect batting average of .000, both in primaries and in general elections. From Dan Quayle to Colin Powell to Steve Forbes to Bob Dole, the neocons always know how to pick a loser—and they do it with such style. After the New Hampshire primary, the *Weekly Standard's* editors were dribbling their formula down their bibs, cooing over the new Republican front-runner. Not so long ago, they were going platinum on their airline mileage, flying down to Austin to cut deals with the governor. Mr. Bush, apparently, is his father's son, and while welcoming neoconservative support—just as he welcomed the support of Bob Jones, III, in South Carolina—he apparently did not prom-

ise to make Kristol II the secretary of state or John Podhoretz chairman of the national physical fitness program. Disappointed, the neocons took the first opportunity they had for stabbing their adopted party in the back.

What did they expect? When Midge Decter called Bush senior an antisemite, the neoconservatives either backed her up or stared at their feet in embarrassed silence. Most of them knew the poor woman had been off her rocker since the 60's, but they could not afford to alienate either her or her equally Christophobic husband. The Kristol-Podhoretz circle has, over the years, accused not only George Bush and Pat Buchanan of anti-semitism, but even the Pope. What Republican in his right mind would ever trust them after their embarrassing displays of intemperance and bad manners? Who but Rupert Murdoch could ever pay attention to their political analysis? Even Murdoch may be getting cold feet, since rumor has it that the *Weekly Standard's* editors have been told that he will pull the plug if they cannot raise the publication's circulation to a respectable level. Rumor also has it that another leading neocon monthly is up for sale because its high-living, big-spending editor failed to deliver on a ridiculous promise to unhorse Bill Clinton.

Who says we are too melancholic? All in all, the millennium is shaping up nicely.

—Thomas Fleming

RONALD TAYLOR, I'd like you to meet Buford Furrow; Buford, this is Ronald. You guys have so much in common. For one thing, you both hit the headlines. Buford Furrow became a celebrity of sorts in August 1999 when he shot up a Jewish community center in Los Angeles. Buford's a real Aryan hero, going up against all those unarmed schoolgirls, and then taking out a mailman who happened to be Filipino. Back in March, Ronald Taylor did pretty much the same kind of deed in Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania, when he decided that the janitor was a racist for not fixing his door quickly enough, and went out to shoot down any white men he could see. He killed three men, the first being 71 years old, before trying to take hostages in a building containing a daycare center, a senior center, a hospice: Now why didn't you think of targets like that, Buford? There's lots of people there who couldn't fight back. The other person I suppose I'd like to have here as well is Benjamin Smith, who made a lot of news last July when he went on a rampage in the Midwest and started randomly shooting Jews, blacks, and Asians, though he also had the decency to shoot himself in the end. Pity: If he were here, that would have made it a trifecta, wouldn't it?

The three of you would have so much to talk about. For one thing, all of you fit the classic profile of mass killers—loners with serious problems with drink and psych wards. All of you also decided along the way that your problems were the fault of some outsider who could be blamed for keeping you lonely and miserable. And there was no shortage of people who could tell you things like that—Nazis and Christian Identity folk for the whites, Nation of Islam fantasists for blacks. Ronald was shouting that he was “out to get all white people,” and in his spare time, he carefully drew up a “Satan List” of businesses owned by whites, Asians, or Jews.

Though Ben and Buford are white, and Ronald is black, the three of you really seem like brothers under the skin. There is one strange thing, though—people react to you so differently. After the two white killers carried out their attacks last summer, there was a national upsurge of soul-searching about “hate crimes,” and about how these just represented the disreputable end of a vast spectrum of white racism which also included a lot of national politicians. Some writers suggested that this kind of hate

should be seen as a mental illness in its own right, so that haters should be put away before they could actually pull the trigger. Alvin F. Poussaint, a learned doctor from Harvard Medical School, suggested that “It's time for the American Psychiatric Association to designate extreme racism as a mental health problem.” As to who the racists are, there was a fair consensus on that too, since racism in this context can only mean white racism. Didn't you know there is, literally, no such animal as black racism? Start suggesting there is, and some bright spark will quote a much-used academic definition which explains that it can only be racism if it is used to enforce existing power relationships, and blacks don't have power, so they can't be racist, Q.E.D. So all the haters are white men. As the *Philadelphia Inquirer* headlined, “White males and mass violence: Many heterosexual, white men feel entitled to success. Social changes, coupled with personal failures, drive them to rage, experts say” (August 15, 1999). Heterosexual, male, and white: If ever there was a powder keg waiting to go off . . .

But things were just different with Ronald Taylor. Certainly the FBI investigated it as a hate crime, and people did use the term, but it was just put in such a different context, or rather, a lack of context. While the crimes of Messrs. Furrow and Smith were blamed on systematic white racism, Taylor's were attributed to, well, systematic white racism. The local NAACP said that, while the crimes were appalling, they had to be seen as “the result of racism, hate, mistrust and poor communication coming on the heels of publicized local incidents involving black men killed by white police” (and recall, racism always means white racism). You could only understand Taylor in the context of racial profiling and the acquittal of the four police officers charged in the shooting death of Amadou Diallo. Nobody commenting on the attacks tried to lay any blame on the black demagogues who have done so much to poison race relations in this country, such as Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton, or Conrad Muhammad.

It's often interesting when reading statements about race to see what bizarre results emerge when we invert the ethnic labels, and the Taylor case was no exception. One state NAACP official declared that “I don't know what drove this man to the point where he couldn't take it anymore,” but Taylor's frustrations revealed

the “seething of racial anger” in her community, concerns that need to be addressed urgently. Funny, if anyone had said anything like that about Buford Furrow, he would probably have been howled down as a racist.

—Philip Jenkins

BJU, R.I.P. Although the Greenville, South Carolina, haven of fundamentalism is still holding classes, the New World Order's steamroller has flattened the life out of Bob Jones University. I'm referring, of course, to the recent abandonment of BJU's ban on interracial dating and marriage on campus. The school's president, Dr. Bob Jones, III, granted the dispensation on *Larry King Live*, after intense scrutiny in the national media following the squabble among Republican presidential candidates George W. Bush, John McCain, and Alan Keyes.

“I want to prove to the world that we are not racists,” said Dr. Jones. As to the accompanying charge of being “anti-Catholic,” he added, “We don't hate Catholics at all—we love them and want to see them come to Christ.”

The fact that some Bible-thumping cracker still believes, as a Protestant, that the Roman Catholic Church has rejected the pure Gospel has sent the media into convulsions. The candidates, of course, fell into line, condemning “racism” and “anti-Catholicism.” Conservative pundits responded with stories about BJU's loss of its tax-exempt status and President Reagan's failed (but valiant) effort to restore it. Liberals, in turn, demanded that Congress censure Bob Jones University.

The real story, however, is that BJU caved. Wooed by the national media and fatigued by their own commitments, they abandoned the “rule [they] never discuss” in exchange for a table crumb, tossed by George W. Bush.

Strict, self-proclaimed “fighting” fundamentalists, unlike evangelicals like Jerry Falwell, typically carry their premillennial pessimism to its logical conclusion: The Church is a life raft amidst the stormy waters of a dying culture; therefore, we should get as many on board as possible, and let the storm rage on. Separation from “the world” has been the identifying mark of fundamentalism since the 1940's and 50's.

Earlier in the 20th century, when William Jennings Bryan won his court case

but lost in the media, American evangelicals separated themselves into their own colleges and publishing houses. During the late 50's, evangelical leaders like Harold Ockenga, Billy Graham, and Charles Fuller decided to broaden their appeal by reaching out to liberals and Roman Catholics, emphasizing their points of agreement. Firebrands like Bob Jones, Sr., rejected this "neo-evangelicalism" and founded their own schools, which were designed to maintain the moral standards of evangelicalism and to preserve militant adherence to a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. Indeed, "separation" was not enough—fundamentalists insisted on "second-degree separation." This meant that not only must they refrain from fellowship with those who denied the "fundamentals," but they must also separate from those who personally upheld the fundamentals but shared a stage with those who rejected or questioned them.

At the height of the conservative movement in the 1980's, fundamentalists did not join the Moral Majority or the Christian Coalition. They remained separate. Bob Jones University furthered its independence by creating its own power plant and getting its meat, dairy, and vegetables from a farm down the street. BJU also stood out by defying the central government's pressure to end its "segregationist" policy. The ban on interracial dating was established in response to the concerns raised by the parents of an Asian boy who wanted to marry a white girl. (Both were BJU students.) The parents—eager to preserve their Asian heritage—threatened to sue the school for allowing them to date at all. (Of course, "dating" at BJU is not the same as elsewhere in today's "no limits" culture. Bob Jones students are not allowed to be alone with the opposite sex; girls cannot wear slacks or shorts; boys must have short, tapered hair; no student can enter a movie theater; rock 'n' roll is forbidden.)

By officially banning interracial dating, Bob Jones University was simply upholding a common cultural commitment (shared by most blacks, Asians, and whites) of America's not-too-distant past (as well as protecting itself from future lawsuits). They added an *ad hoc* justification to the policy, one that they, no doubt, believed to be true until recently: The Tower of Babel was a divine act, not to be reversed. The American melting pot, therefore, is an end-times Antichrist plot, reducing all nations to their least

common denominator and blending away their deeply held beliefs and distinctions.

"We no longer believe that to be true," said Dr. Jones on CNN. The question is, why not? As the NATO war machine rolls through Eastern Europe, as our Washington taskmasters crack their whips across our backs, what makes Dr. Jones think that the Antichrist plot is no longer afoot? Are we living—once again—in Cotton Mather's "great Christian America"?

Perhaps fundamentalism is playing catch-up to American evangelicalism. Before long, fundamentalists might also attempt to lure in young people with Christian rock 'n' rollers such as the recently divorced Amy Grant, or by playing beach-blanket bingo with Campus Crusade for Christ. Maybe they are ready to hold hands with Coach McCartney and his Promise Keepers, and let all the walls come down.

For serious Christians of all denominations, the Bob Jones University of Bob Jones, Sr., and Bob Jones, II, represented the kind of self-determination that originally made America great—and free. Those—like Bob Jones, III—who cave in to the pressures of the New World Culture usually don't stop until they strip themselves of everything that makes them distinct. Once you start chasing after the media's and the government's approval, you have yielded up the ghost.

—Aaron D. Wolf

"DISCRIMINATION" is one of today's buzzwords, and laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation are fueling some of the sharpest skirmishes within America's culture wars. A New Jersey Supreme Court ruling against the Boy Scouts' ban on homosexual Scout leaders has gained the most publicity of late. But a public feud between one of America's largest para-church ministries and one of its largest banks, along with an intra-denominational dispute over same-sex couples at a Chicago-area church camp, further illustrate the starkness of the battle lines.

James Dobson's Colorado-based Focus on the Family is one of the nation's largest para-church evangelical ministries, with 1,300 employees and an annual budget of \$112 million. Any large banking firm would presumably covet managing the ministry's charitable gift annuity.

But not the Pittsburgh-based Mellon Bank, which rebuffed Focus's approach, citing the bank's policy of non-discrimination based on "sexual orientation." Dobson's group is one of the nation's leading opponents of same-sex "marriage" and of public school curricula that advocate acceptance of homosexual practice.

Not one to shy away from controversy, Dobson took to the airwaves against the banking giant, urging his three to four million radio listeners to phone Mellon Bank to complain about its discrimination against a Christian ministry because of its beliefs.

Apparently inundated with phone calls, Mellon threatened legal action against Focus if the campaign did not end. But as the complaints continued, Mellon relented and offered its services to Dobson's group, claiming a "misunderstanding" had divided the organizations.

Mellon told Focus that it would "consider" a business arrangement with the ministry so long as the bank is not expected to compromise its policy regarding sexual orientation. No thanks, said Focus, which denied ever making an issue of Mellon's employment practices.

Focus was looking for a bank with financial prowess, not necessarily conservative views. In fact, Focus said it would take its business to the San Francisco-based Wells Fargo Company, which must comply with that city's ordinance against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In another situation involving less corporate firepower but no less emotion, a United Methodist camp near Chicago is battling its own denominational officials over its refusal to rent a cabin to a same-sex couple.

The Historic Methodist Campground at Des Plaines, Illinois, dates back to the great revivals of the pre-Civil War Midwest. Less prone to fiery revivalism now, the camp plays host mostly to older Methodists looking for a quiet retreat.

Last year, a male "couple" with a four-year-old foster child rented a cabin at the camp, and later wrote a letter of thanks that was published in the camp newsletter. Many residents and trustees were troubled that the church camp had hosted a less-than-traditional "family." The board of trustees refused to rent the cottage to the couple for a second summer.

Although the trustees thought they were upholding the beliefs of their own

denomination, their local church leaders disagreed. The liberal-dominated Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church launched an investigation. Led by a bishop who opposes his denomination's official opposition to homosexual practice, the regional church body was troubled by allegations of discrimination against a same-sex couple.

Pro-homosexual clergy from throughout northern Illinois were encouraged to attend and even to vote at the camp's board of trustees meeting. Expecting a hostile crowd, the camp had two dozen police officers and several police dogs surrounding its gates, barring entry to all but cottage owners and trustees.

Only about 40 ministers and church leaders actually showed up outside the locked gates. But the heavy police presence generated publicity throughout the 8.4 million member United Methodist denomination. "This is unholy ground," pronounced an infuriated Chicago-area pastor.

He and others in the regional church asked Cook County's Commission on Human Rights to intervene. The county ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation is supposed to exempt religious organizations. But the commission has asked a judge to compel the church camp to accept the same-sex couple.

A camp spokeswoman denies the Methodist camp discriminates against anyone. "We only ask that all come for the religious and spiritual purposes to which this camp ground has been dedicated for some 140 years," she said in a statement on behalf of the trustees.

Both sides are appealing to church law. The United Methodist Church officially disapproves of homosexual prac-

tice. But the church also officially opposes any discrimination based on sexual orientation, even though church law itself discriminates by refusing to ordain practicing homosexuals into the ministry.

The Historic Methodist Campground and Focus on the Family have fallen victim to misbegotten rules regarding non-discrimination based on "sexual orientation." Such regulations sound innocuous. But they have increasingly become instruments for imposing an alien social orthodoxy on private groups that simply want to establish ethical standards for their own communities. And these laws are based on a popular but irrational view that diverse sexual behaviors can be equated with morally neutral traits such as race or sex.

—Mark Tooley

"CHILDREN KILLING CHILDREN."

The very phrase is chilling. But what can the law do about a six-year-old who shoots and kills his first-grade classmate? According to our Anglo-American legal heritage of common law, not much. Children under the age of seven are presumed not to be able to know the difference between right and wrong, and thus are not held criminally responsible for their actions. This can be superceded by statute, however, and in Michigan, where the latest such instance (at this writing) occurred, there is no lower age limit on criminal prosecutions. (This is true of 22 other states as well.) Nevertheless, the prosecutor for Genesee County, where the Buell Elementary School is located, has made clear his belief that both the victim and the perpetrator in this case are to be pitied, and that punishment is inappropriate.

The six-year-old shooter came from a troubled family, to put it mildly, and was, at the time of his misdeed, living in what the media described as a "crack house." He found his weapon, a .32 caliber semi-automatic handgun, on a bed, left there by a 19-year-old "roommate" of the boy's "legal guardian," his uncle. Prosecutors are now bringing charges of involuntary manslaughter against the roommate, on the grounds that his gross negligence and recklessness in leaving a loaded handgun where the six-year-old could find it is what caused the loss of life.

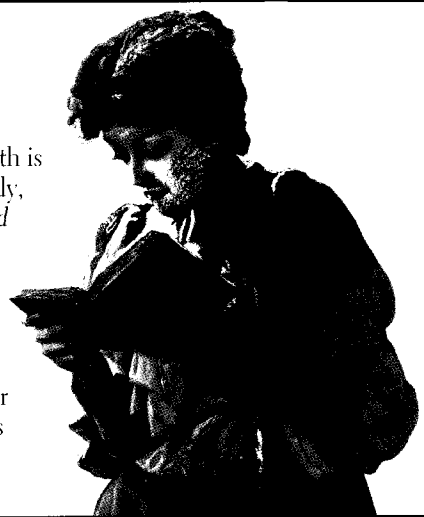
This may satisfy public sentiment to do something, anything, but it is unlikely to prevent another such tragedy. Not surprisingly, the shooting immediately became fodder for the current presidential race. Vice President Al Gore demanded legislation requiring child-proof trigger locks on handguns and castigated George W. Bush and John McCain for not concurring. President Clinton used the occasion to condemn the National Rifle Association and to press Republicans in Congress to pass further restrictions on gun ownership. Whether the roommate was the kind of fellow who might have removed a trigger lock from his (apparently stolen) gun before leaving it for a child to find is a question that did not seem to enter either the President's or the Vice President's mind.

This tragedy and other school shootings might have been prevented but for the current educational dogma that we should "mainstream" troubled or challenged youths into regular public school classrooms. It's not unusual to find classrooms populated with "special attendants" hired to supervise individual children with "special needs." The attendants' job is to make sure their charges don't harm themselves or others while they "benefit" their classmates through the educational experience of coping uneasily with each other. The six-year-old perpetrator in the Michigan case, according to the *New York Post*, "is a monster who has been in serious trouble at school from Day 1, [h]is father is in jail, [and] his mother is an admitted drug addict." According to other reports, the little boy had a brother who was abused by their mother. It does not seem unreasonable to infer that the boy and his victim would both have been better off had he been placed in a special educational environment more attuned to his needs.

There seems little the law can do to prevent such tragedies. Like so many

BOOK OF NEXT MONTH

Our selection for the Book of Next Month is Graham Hancock's groundbreaking study, *Lords of Poverty: The Power, Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business*. A controversial indictment of a \$60 billion-a-year industry, *Lords of Poverty* shows that big business and charitable organizations have often used foreign aid to enrich themselves with our tax dollars, while the intended recipients of the aid are left worse off.



matters of domestic policy, this one is best left to local governments. Through experimentation, they just might be able to create some policies to discourage reproduction by those unable adequately to care for their young, to remove children from the houses of crack dealers, or to enforce effectively the gun laws we already have.

Remarkably, such experimentation might actually be bearing fruit. While the sensationalizing of youth violence continues apace, there is evidence that the actual incidence of such crime is on the decline. Random acts of savage behavior, especially among the urban underclass, have been the norm throughout most of American history. Candid social scientists confess that we still don't understand the root causes of crime or social pathology. There are still those who believe that the problem is either genetic or environmental, but there are also an increasing number who say it is intractable evil itself.

Social tinkering around the edges of the problem won't accomplish much; institutionalization is both expensive and politically unpalatable. The United States now has more of its population incarcerated than does any other leading industrial nation, and placing tiny felons behind bars is unappealing. Felonies seem to be committed less frequently by those with a greater stake in the community, and moral, spiritual, cultural, or even economic response to the Michigan tragedy may be more promising than legal ones.

—Stephen B. Presser

THE CHECHEN WAR, as the Russian leadership discovered in early March, is far from over. On the night of March 2, a convoy of nine trucks, carrying about 100 Internal Ministry special forces troops from Grozny to the strategically important crossroads village of Pervomayskaya, was ambushed by an estimated 40 Chechen *boyevikiy* ("fighters" or "warriors"). The first and last trucks were taken out by rocket-propelled grenades; the Chechens then rained heavy machine-gun fire on the trucks trapped in between. Around 40 of the special forces troops were killed and around 20 wounded, according to Russian media reports. Meanwhile, other Chechen troops counterattacked near the mouth of the Argun gorge in southern Chechnya, briefly re-capturing sever-

al villages, then melting back into the snowy mountain passes.

The Russian military appeared confused, at first denying that a successful counterattack had taken place, then gradually revealing approximately what had happened. Vladimir Putin, appearing shaken and angry, told Russian television that the "incompetence" of certain unnamed MVD officers was at fault. The most embarrassing part of the entire episode was that the ambush had taken place in the "secure zone," an area that the Russians had allegedly "mopped up" after entering Grozny.

Very few people asked the obvious question: Did the Russian military, flush with "victory" after taking Grozny, really believe that the war was over? Had they already forgotten the lessons of the last war? By the Kremlin's own admission, between 2,000 and 5,000 *boyevikiy* remain at large. None of the first-rank Chechen warlords have been captured, and Chechnya's borders—especially the one with Georgia, through which the Chechens are being re-supplied—remain porous.

The truth is that the Russians were in about the same position in 1995. Having taken Grozny, the Russian expeditionary force had supposedly trapped the rebels in the Argun Gorge. But the Chechens disappeared into the mountain passes and reappeared in the Russians' rear, conducting ambushes and retaking, albeit briefly, towns and villages in a "secure zone" that included Grozny, which changed hands several times in the course of the 1995-96 war.

True, the Russians have shown signs of learning some of the lessons of the last war: Artillery and airpower have cleared the way for ground troops this time, and the Russians have seldom been foolish enough to send clumsy armored vehicles into the streets of Grozny, where the Chechens often successfully ambushed

convoys during the first war. It is also true that the series of terrorist bombings last fall and Putin's air of competence and firmness have so far kept the Russians (meaning the ethnically Russian; support is very thin among minorities, especially Muslims) firmly behind the war. But casualties are probably twice as high as the official figure of around 5,000 killed and wounded, and the unpopularity of the first war (a misnomer—the Russians and Chechens have been fighting each other for 200 years) was based not on warm and fuzzy feelings for the Chechens, whom the Russians frankly despise, but on the simple feeling among common people that they did not wish their sons to die in vain, victims of a corrupt and incompetent system that treated its people as an expendable commodity.

—Denis Petrov

OBITER DICTA: Richard Moore, a poet from Belmont, Massachusetts, has contributed two new poems to this issue. Mr. Moore is the author of nine books of poetry, as well as translations of Plautus and Euripides, a book of literary essays, and a novel, *The Investigator*. His most recent book of verse, *Pygmies and Pyramids*, was published by Orchises Press. Mr. Moore teaches at Clark University and gives frequent readings in the Boston area.

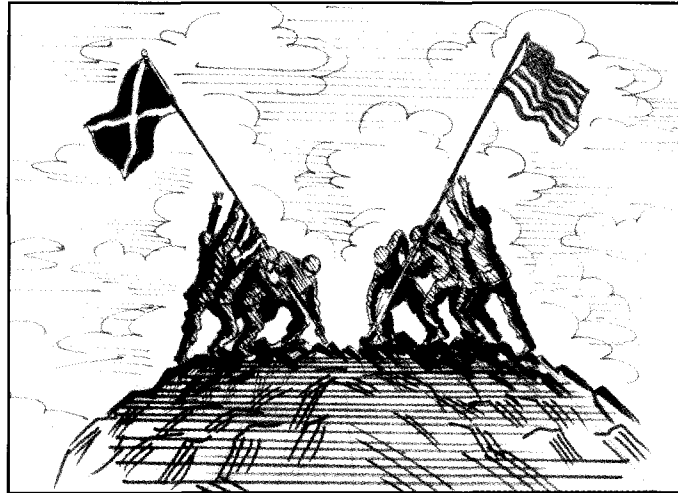
Our illustrator this month is new to the pages of *Chronicles*. A native of Canada, Patrick Fitzgerald studied illustration at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto. Before becoming a freelance illustrator, he worked for an advertising agency for two years. His clients have included the *Washington Post*, the U.S. Postal Service, Harcourt Brace, Scholastic, Penguin, and Oxford University Press. His work regularly appears in the *Globe and Mail*.

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Patrick Fitzgerald

The Emperor's Tattoo

by Thomas Fleming

"A monarchy that's tempered with republican equality."

Who would have thought, 100 years ago, that by the end of the American Century the great burning public issue would be the Confederate flag? Back in 1900, Americans were eager to put their quarrels behind them. Rebs and Yanks had fought side by side in Cuba, and writers like Owen Wister were calling for reconciliation between the good people North and South and solidarity against the "Yellow Rich" who were even then destroying the Old Republic.

Even 40 to 50 years ago, Southern symbols were not subject to controversy. I well remember the hordes of Midwestern tourists who came to Charleston to celebrate the centennial of the firing on Fort Sumter. It was during those centennial years, in fact, that the Confederate flag was revived, and I do not recall hearing of protests from the NAACP or any other race-baiting organization. The most popular film in those days, North and South, was still *Gone with the Wind*.

That spirit of tolerance and national unity has disappeared, gone with the wind indeed, and the attacks on all Southern symbols have reached the proportions of a national campaign. Monuments to Southern leaders are defaced, flags that include the Confederate St. Andrew's Cross are banned from hotel chains and corporate headquarters, streets and schools bearing witness to the Confederate past are renamed. Up here in Illinois, talk-radio programs are plagued by crank callers who think it is their duty to tell the people of South Carolina what flag to fly—as if the revived Ku Klux Klan of the 20th century had not been strongest in Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin; as if African-Americans were not moving South to escape the hell that Midwesterners have made of their cities.

The Northern liberal attack on Southern conservative tradi-

tions has been a great boon for organizations like the League of the South, but many patriotic Southerners who do not fully understand what the struggle is about persist in giving history lessons to their opponents. The flag controversy is not an argument over logic or history, but a struggle for power. In trying to prove their good faith, Southern apologists make much of the fact that their flag is not a symbol of racism, but a Christian emblem of a brave and honorable people who believed they were defending their homes and civilization itself. That is just the point. It is precisely bravery and honor, civilization and Christianity which the flag's detractors are out to destroy, not only in the South or within the United States but everywhere.

The rewriting of history, the renaming of streets, the replacement of old symbols by new, the redesign of the calendar—these are the hallmarks of ideological revolution, whether Jacobin, Bolshevik, Nazi, or Democratist. And if the U.S. government has not yet sponsored a Festival of Reason on the Washington Mall, U.S. legislators and judges have done much worse in promoting an official ideology that is opposed to every decent thing Americans once believed in, from the Holy Trinity to a normal man's love for the woman who will bear his children; and in marginalizing and demonizing the last few American men who love women, acknowledge Christ, or maintain the customs and traditions of their ancestors, the regime that beams its big-toothed benevolent grin to the entire world reveals its true colors.

Gone with the Wind was a dominant political myth from the 30's to the 60's, but in the years between David O. Selznick's 1939 screen homage to Margaret Mitchell and the decision made by Selznick's spiritual heirs, four decades later, to preface

the cinematic travesty with an ideological warning against the film's presentation of historical events and racial stereotypes, a new regime was taking shape. In the anti-Southern/anti-American world in which we find ourselves, the memorable performances of Hattie McDaniel and Butterfly McQueen would constitute hate speech, and Selznik, Victor Fleming, Margaret Mitchell, and Clark Gable would very likely stand trial for perpetrating a thoughtcrime.

A visitor from 1960 might think he had lost his mind if someone told him that here in America a citizen could be fined and imprisoned for expressing a prejudice, that a misdemeanor could be promoted to a felony if the criminal could be shown to have been motivated by racial, religious, or sexual bigotry. Even *New Republic/Weekly Standard* liberals—and God knows these are people who have spent their entire lives injecting novocaine into their frontal lobes—even liberals are uncomfortable with the overcriminalization of thought and expression.

Overcriminalization and excessive punishment for certain classes of crimes are a clue to understanding this and every type of regime. In the Middle Ages, for example, particularly in areas where the Church exercised strong political influence, heresy and dissent could be treated as very serious, even capital crimes—a fact which would have astonished Greek and Roman pagans. Although the “crimes” of the Inquisition have been grotesquely exaggerated by the anti-Catholic propaganda we call history, medieval Christians were serious about their religion, regarding it as the foundation of their moral and social life and punishing deviations from it much as honeybees sting to death the defective member of the hive who improves upon the bee dance.

Religion—and I include even the false anti-religion of Marx—is not the only ideological basis for a regime. In Florence, where class warfare was the dominating principle, an aristocrat who slapped (even justifiably) a commoner could incur fines that exceeded his entire estate, and the liability for payment extended to his cousins and uncles. If the Florentines really wanted to punish someone, they simply declared him noble, much as Walter Williams and Clarence Thomas, for their opposition to this race-based regime, seem to have been declared virtual whites.

England went through a series of phases. In the Middle Ages, the shrine of Thomas of Canterbury was the chief destination of Christian pilgrims. In Tudor England, when a series of thug monarchs were consolidating their power over the church and the economy, the principles of *praemunire* and *lèse majesté* were invoked to eliminate—literally—anyone unwise enough to consult the pope on theology or criticize the king (or queen), and the shrine of St. Thomas, which had been the visible symbol of the church's power to limit tyranny, was broken up. By the 18th century, however, when capitalism had replaced the divine right of kings, there were hundreds of capital crimes in England, most of them having to do with property.

Why belabor the point? In each case, the power base of the regime is virtually defined by the overcriminalization of acts (and thoughts) which would be punished lightly, if at all, in another society. Defenders of Henry VIII or Robert Walpole or N. Lenin will always find other reasons for admiring their regimes—the dignity of the Anglican prayer book, a booming economy, the enfranchisement of the poor—but the core of the regime is whatever it overprotects.

The Third Reich is a case in point. Nearly every month, I re-

ceive two or three hysterical cards from American brownshirts, insisting that the Führer was simply a patriotic German who did not really persecute the Jews. It goes without saying that many good Germans found plausible reasons for supporting the Nazis against the communists, but what sort of patriotic regime deprives its own citizens of liberty, property, and life on the basis of a race-theory?

Nazi apologists argue that Hitler was responding to excessive Jewish influence over German institutions. If that were really their concern, the Nazis might have followed the example of earlier antisemitic rulers who persecuted or expelled practicing Jews, along with any converts they suspected of duplicity. Some half-Jews, it is true, did remain in Germany; some, even, were found within the ranks of the Nazi Party. However, the Nazis were not interested in Judaism as a religion but as a race, and they punished even quarter-Jews whose parents and grandparents had converted, often sincerely, to Christianity.

No, the Nazi regime was defined by its obsession with race and nation, and Slavs no less than Jews had to be eliminated, except as a source for slave labor. To describe the Third Reich as merely “antisemitic” is a slur on antisemites.

Hitler's regime in Germany was at least as evil as the Bolshevik regime under Lenin and Stalin, but such an equation sounds mildly subversive in a country where one component of the reigning ideology is the holocaust, transformed from history into a myth which has displaced the reality of millions of Jews, Poles, Gypsies, and Catholic priests murdered by the Nazis and which, for many American Jews, has also displaced (as Jacob Neusner has observed) the authentic religion of Judaism. It is a myth, not because the Nazis did not kill a great many people, but because the meaning of those terrible years has been twisted and distorted into a weapon to destroy every real and good thing in the traditions of European and American Christendom.

This point was driven home to me when I was serving on a Department of Education panel that reviews curriculum projects to determine their suitability for the USDOE seal of approval. One of the projects given to my panel was a holocaust education unit with the title (as I recall), “Facing History and Ourselves.” Even more than the enormous errors of historical fact and interpretation that were being fed to middle-school students, what really appalled me was the assessment of blame. After reviewing the materials, I got the impression that the real guilty parties were the German people, Martin Luther, the pope, and, ultimately, Jesus Christ, who founded the religion of antisemitism. The National Socialists got off comparatively unscathed—perhaps because they were, after all, socialists.

The significance was clear to me. The propagators of the new religion of the holocaust are not actually interested in the sufferings of the Jews but in the destruction of every good thing that can be tarred with the Nazi brush: Lutheran and Catholic Christianity, patriotism and the affection for one's own people and traditions, conventional morality, traditional art and literature.

Leo Strauss called it the *reductio ad Hitlerum*. If Hitler liked neoclassical art, that means that classicism in every form is Nazi; if Hitler wanted to strengthen the German family, that makes the traditional family (and its defenders) Nazi; if Hitler spoke of the “nation” or the “folk,” then any invocation of nationality, ethnicity, or even folkishness is Nazi; and although some leftist Jews who exploited the holocaust tried to exempt their own religion and traditions from the rules they were set-

ting up for the rest of us, by the 1960's there were gentle (and some Jewish) leftists who attacked Zionism and even Judaism itself. Noam Chomsky may be an honest intellectual, according to his lights; as a leftist, however, he makes a bad Jew.

In Germany, France, and Canada, any criticism of the dark myth of the holocaust—valid or not—is subject to penalties. I do not defend the work of, for example, Robert Faurisson or even David Irving, but the abuse which they and their colleagues have received is out of all proportion to their sins. I share the general distaste—moral and aesthetic—for holocaust revisionists whose arguments seem to come down to the contradictory propositions that Hitler killed no Jews, and that it is too bad he let so many of them get away. But even if all critiques of holocaust propaganda were of this type—and they are not—how would that make Ernst Zundel any different from Marxist professors who spent so many years defending Stalin or Mao or, for that matter, from all the sycophantic historians who have defended Sherman's March, the Dresden firebombings, and the two atomic bombs dropped on Japanese civilians?

Some day, alien scholars will find the contradictions amusing, how the same people can defend the First Amendment rights of Larry Flynt but try to silence David Irving; how they could speak, last summer, of bombing for peace and, in the memorable words of our man in Prague, of the first war fought for humanitarian principles; how democracy can mean, for example, that the elected Slobodan Milosevic is by definition a dictator while the unelected king of Saudi Arabia, who persecutes Christians for merely displaying the cross, is a legitimate ruler and an ally of this great democracy.

In February, Madeleine Albright went into one of her typical seizures of enraged *kakolalia* when some portion of the Austrian people voted for Jörg Haider's Freedom Party. That Marxists and ex-Marxists and quasi-Marxists are in charge of half the governments of the world does not disturb Pani Albright, and she has no problem in working for an anti-American leftist who, as a student, organized demonstrations in support of the murdering communists.

This is not hypocrisy: The point of all the leftist arguments is not democracy or free speech or human rights. They are interested solely in the defense and expansion of their regimes, which are all based on historical lies: the greatness of Franklin Roosevelt; the popular front alliance against fascism; the moral, intellectual, and political virtues of "Dr." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Here is a short course in the evolution of the American regime. In the beginning, we revered the great Washington as the prototypical American, the farmer who left his plow to defend the people's liberty. Later on, most Americans (especially Democrats) added Jefferson and Jackson to the pantheon, as a corrective to the austere aristocratic Father of Our Country. After the war that destroyed the union, Lincoln was turned into the martyr for equality.

By 1945, the year of my birth, Washington was on the dollar bill, Lincoln on the five-spot and the penny, and FDR on the dime. Under this benevolent national socialist empire within the form of a republic, two of our four national political holidays were the birthdays of the Father of the Republic, George Washington, and of Abraham Lincoln, the stepfather who turned the republic into an empire. Democrats continued to celebrate Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, and Northerners indulged the Southerners in their adoration of Lee and Stonewall Jackson.

Like most regimes, the United States of my childhood was based on a series of constructive myths, and just as most conservatives were content to accept FDR as the hero who saved us from socialism, most Southerners accepted Lincoln as a tragic leader who may have plunged the country into war but would have prevented the violence of Reconstruction. In the short run, such positive myths were useful—even necessary—components of a national ideology that glued the diverse races, classes, and sections together. The only important question—apart from truth, which is never a political question—was whether or not the revolution inaugurated by Lincoln and expanded under the New Deal could be contained.

In fact, the early years of the Cold War succeeded in containing more than Soviet expansion. In the Eisenhower decade, leftist revolution was stuck in the mud, making progress something like Mark Clark's advance through Sicily. Then came the evil Kennedys, their betrayal of our conservative allies everywhere, (particularly in Vietnam where they arranged the murder of President Diem), and their embrace of a leftist demagogue who turned an honorable movement for civil rights into a social and political revolution that betrayed his own people while undermining all that was best in the old bourgeois order.

In his dissolute private life, in his Marxist anti-American principles, in the social destruction he inflicted upon both black and white communities, Martin Luther King, Jr., is the perfect symbol of the new American regime that makes slaves of all of us, and it is fitting that we no longer have days to honor Washington and Lincoln, only a generic Presidents Day that lumps Millard Fillmore, Warren Harding, and U.S. Grant together with Washington and Lincoln. Today, the first political holiday of the year honors the man who, while accomplishing nothing, still stands as a symbol representing the destruction of our Constitution, the nationalization of our schools, and the extinction of our political liberty.

If I had a career, the previous paragraph would have damaged whatever my observations on the holocaust myth and President-for-Life Roosevelt had failed to destroy. We do not live in a free country, if by "free" we mean a place where people may speak their minds without being punished. Nearly every spokesman for the conservative "opposition" is careful to interlard his speeches with references to his admiration for FDR, his reverence for the legacy of Martin Luther King, his determination to fight for the rights of women and "gays," and his sensitivity to the feelings of blacks, Mexicans, Jews, and Indians—oops, Jewish and Native Americans.

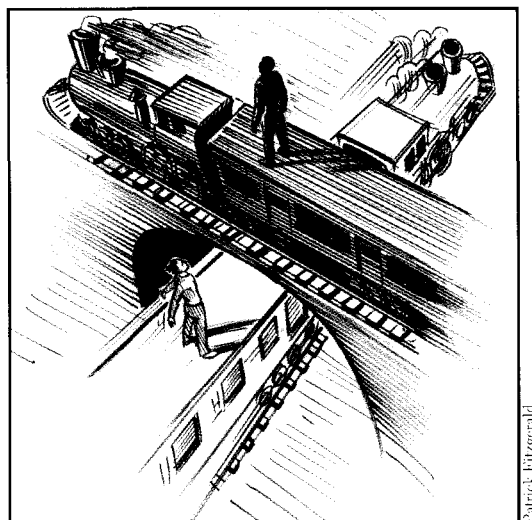
The regime, as most intelligent Americans have come to realize, is based on race—or rather, racism. Those who dissent from the racist myths of white devils, patriarchal males, bigoted Southerners, antisemitic Christians—to say nothing of Uncle Toms, Orcos, and self-hating Jews—will find themselves the focus of a regime-sponsored hate campaign that will cost them their reputations and their careers. In Canada, they may even be fined or jailed for repeating biblical injunctions against sodomy, and the Canadians are only one chapter ahead of us other Americans in the book of racist tyranny.

Other elite classes have used class resentments—or brute force—to bolster their power; ours employs the time-honored technique summed up by the deified Julius in his formula *Divide et impera*, divide and rule, and they are willing to silence, fine, imprison, and persecute any dissident who says that, underneath the new clothes he is not wearing, the emperor has tattooed his sacred person all over with swastikas.

A Vast White-Wing Conspiracy?

The Media and the Race Card

by Philip Jenkins



I like reading about hate crime: It is such a cheering feature of American life. And while I am always happy to see the excellent news about this kind of offense—ever-rising numbers, more and more crimes in ever-broader areas of the country—I wish we could get those statistics even higher. The reasons for my satisfaction should be obvious. In 1950 or 1900, very few people cared about the acts that today we call “hate crime.” While many did agonize over the enduring curse of lynch law, nobody paid serious attention to the countless acts of petty malice directed against other racial or religious groups, the sort of graffiti and name-calling that today swells our hate-crime statistics. As society became ever more sensitive to these hostilities, the number of attacks and insults declined steeply, and for the first time, it became politically conceivable to count these events. The more hostile society becomes toward intolerance, the higher the statistics for recorded hate crimes, which thus become an excellent barometer for inter-group tolerance and general civility. I like hate crime for the same reason that I like child abuse: The less frequently it occurs, the more we see it, and the very fact that we are counting it means it is declining.

The virtues of hate-crime figures seem so obvious that it is hard to believe anyone could take them negatively, but of course, some do. Whenever the mass media report on hate crime, it is always in tones of affected shock and horror, and usually in ludicrously overheated terms—the figures represent an epidemic of hate, hate crimes are spiraling out of control, and so on. If the federal government records ten percent more hate

crimes than a couple of years ago, this means that, well, there is ten percent more hatred. Logically, then, back in the 1950’s, when the number of recorded hate crimes was zero, there was no hatred, and we all lived in the terrestrial paradise. A moment’s thought should put that deduction in its proper context.

If we believe the media, then at the start of the new millennium, after decades of civil rights and affirmative-action legislation, race relations in the United States are getting ever worse—worse than the times of lynching and segregation, worse than the bloody riots of 1919 or 1967: We are living through an epidemic of hate. The whole idea is so bizarre as to raise doubts about the sanity, or at least the integrity, of the news organs presenting such a picture: Just walk down your street, look around at your place of work, and you will know it is not true. And yet the overblown coverage of hate crimes is of a piece with how the newspapers and the television news programs represent race relations in this country: as a viper’s nest of seething racism and barely restrained white violence. In short, if your view of racial conditions in modern America is utterly wrong, quite tainted at every point, then you must have been following the mass media.

One noteworthy example of the media’s hair-trigger response on racism was the church arson non-crisis which occurred during the spring and summer of 1996. The story can be told simply enough. Early in that year, fires occurred at a number of predominantly black churches, mainly in the South, and by March, media reports were construing the discrete incidents as part of a national wave of attacks by hate groups: There was almost certainly a national conspiracy, probably involving the Ku Klux Klan. Within a week or two, the story had developed such

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powerful legs that the network television news predictably began each evening with Dan Rather or one of his clones standing grim-faced in a field somewhere announcing the latest day's outrages. Deval Patrick, the assistant attorney general for civil rights, described the burnings as "an epidemic of terror." At this critical juncture, the U.S. Congress demonstrated its courageous leadership by unanimously passing the Church Arson Prevention Act: Imagine going on record with a vote against that one!

Newspaper headlines consistently portrayed the attacks as symptoms of social crisis and, frankly, of white malfeasance. The *San Francisco Chronicle* headlined, "Racism's Spark Glows in Church Ashes" (July 16, 1996), while the *Washington Post* noted that "Church Fires Said to Reflect Racial Tension; Problem Deep-Rooted, Rights Agency Asserts" (October 10, 1996). The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* ran a cartoon showing an arsonist escaping the black church he has just torched, while the flames throw a vast shadow of the culprit, whose head sprouts prominent horns. The *New York Times* remarked, "As arson cases mount, the burning of Southern black churches causes outrage and recalls a violent past" (June 23, 1996). Another *Times* columnist asked, as "church after church in the south has been destroyed by fire . . . I ask my father across the void, who will put out the flames now, Dad? Where can we go now to be safe?" How, indeed, could any black person be safe when every white had murder in his heart, if not genocide? This was pretty much the lesson of the farcically melodramatic film *Rosewood*, which was released shortly afterward.

The story culminated with the mass arrests and reeducation of all the people who were practicing hatred in the great republic, whereupon there dawned a new age of peace and justice: As the children of the future played together free of prejudice or intolerance, only very old people recalled a bleak time when people had been judged by anything less than the content of their character, or when so vile an implement of hatred as a "gun" had been owned by a private citizen. The previous sentence is entirely bogus, but it is scarcely more improbable than anything else in this unhappy story, with all its images of shadowy demon figures assailing the community in the night: Remember the medieval notion of Jews poisoning the wells?

Everything about the church arson story was concocted. Of course, black churches were burning in 1996, as were white churches and Chinese churches, Korean-owned convenience stores, and Latino gas stations. There is no evidence that churches were more likely to be the targets of arson than hitherto, nor that congregations of any particular ethnic hue were

victimized more than any other. In fact, arson is a very distinctive crime, in that perpetrators normally share certain characteristics in a way that is not true, for instance, of robbery. It is very often an internal crime: Buildings or institutions are frequently targeted by people who are involved in a particular community—white church fires are usually set by whites, black churches are burned by blacks. In examining any church arson, the first suspect would generally be a member of that congregation; the second focus of suspicion would invariably be a local volunteer fireman, since this line of work so notoriously attracts firebugs—ask any cop.

Arson is rarely associated with political violence or terrorism, but is commonly the work of disturbed offenders suffering from some degree of personality disorder. Incidentally, these are just the sort of individuals likely to respond enthusiastically to a publicity wave by committing copycat attacks: Did the media realize that their barrage of nonsense might create a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Even if the arson attacks were racially motivated, a national conspiracy remained wildly unlikely, since groups like the Klan's Invisible Empire have long been so heavily penetrated by law enforcement. Remember the old joke that Germany would never have a revolution because the police would not grant the permit? It is equally improbable that the FBI would ever permit the rightist bands which it controls so tightly to unleash the racial holy war for which the militants yearn so passionately. In any event, the arrests made in connection with the various church fires were extremely diverse: While a handful of culprits were Klansmen, the vast majority had no political ties whatever, and a good number were black. Some offenders, too, were certainly acting for financial motives, using the social panic to collect insurance claims. There was no evidence of any conspiracy, or at least nothing which went beyond a single town or county.

Why did the media easily buy into the conspiracy story? Do reporters just grasp at dramatic and emotive stories regardless of political content, or do they demonstrate a consistent partisan bias, on the lines we have come to expect from hate-crime stories? On the surface, the arson conspiracy narrative was appealing, with its images of vicious terrorists attacking innocent citizens by violating cherished places of worship, but it was not necessarily any more attractive than a dozen other conspiracy stories in recent years which were far better substantiated, and which the media had successfully buried. It still defies belief that, of all the skeletons in the Clintons' political closet in Arkansas, the media spent their time on the trivial issues of bimbos and \$50,000 land deals, while ignoring the abundant evidence that Clinton cronies were dealing drugs, running weapons, and generally operating the Arkansas state government as a crime syndicate. Of course, the media would not be gullible enough to accept wild conspiracy theories peddled by special-interest groups: Reporters were far too busy hunting down the countless legions of hooded night-riders wandering the country to burn black churches. I am sure we have all met them on the roads some dark night.

The theory of deliberate media bias gains some confirmation from the timing of the initial charges which detonated the panic, coming as they did so conveniently before the 1996 presidential campaign: It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that some media outlets were running the story to generate support for liberal and Democratic causes, while other sources were

Autumn Chore

by Richard Moore

Would that I could inside, tucked in, doze:
not wrestle old, rotting storm windows.
Well, it's appropriate, it's true.
The old wrestler's rotting too.
I can see, through them, death draw near.
This job measures me every year.

drawn into the hysteria. The arson panic also meshed well with the media's last foray into creating national menaces, namely, the great militia scare of the previous summer. During 1995, newspapers and television news programs had triumphantly hammered home the idea that all conservative and "anti-government" activists were more or less overtly connected with ultra-right paramilitary groups. Only a week after the Oklahoma City bombing, the ineffable Bryant Gumbel declared that the attack "has focused renewed attention on the rhetoric that's been coming from the right and those who cater to angry white men." (One of Gumbel's more recent contributions to political theory is his division of Americans into two camps: "liberals" and "racists.") The church arson scare made the threat a still more palpable reality by linking conservatives or anti-Clintonites to outright brutality against the poor and minorities. "You don't believe in affirmative action? You think Clinton is a crook? You support the Republican Congress? Those are just the extremist ideas which are burning churches in Georgia today." However outrageous the linkage sounds, enough people may have bought it to swing elections in both 1996 and 1998.

The media's use of the non-story of church arsons would be harrowing enough if it were an isolated occurrence, but it is not, and many subsequent incidents have demonstrated the same degree of credulous stupidity, the same tendency to leap to assumptions of white guilt and conservative malice, the same habit of presenting minorities as ever subject to threats of white violence. The issue of affirmative action produces prize examples of such bias. In virtually every opinion poll, large majorities reject the ideas of preferential status or provisions for any ethnic group, and African-Americans are well represented among opponents. This may explain why the electronic media

in particular so often report the issue in terms which are not just loaded but thoroughly distorted, and which present the exact opposite of the truth. Instead of "ending racial preferences," the headlines report on conservative attempts to "end diversity," "reverse anti-discrimination policies," "attack equal opportunity," and so on: CNN is an egregious offender in this regard. Somewhere along the line, the media unquestioningly accepted the puzzling principle that "diversity" is a synonym for affirmative action, and that ending the latter imperils the former: Advocates of color-blind policies thus become "foes of diversity." Always finely attuned to white liberal sentiment, the NAACP's Kweisi Mfume even argued that affirmative-action policies needed to be augmented as an effective way of stemming the tide of church burnings.

No wonder that consumers of news believe that anti-affirmative-action policies are intended to purge minorities from the faculty or student bodies of colleges, or to begin a new era of segregation; nor is it surprising that students demonstrating in favor of affirmative action wave placards asserting, "We won't go back." I will pay them the compliment of believing that their fears are quite genuine, that they really believe that nothing but a Justice Department under liberal Democratic control prevents the reintroduction of Jim Crow, enforced by systematic lynching, arson, and anti-black violence. Such a nightmare vision is so inexplicably out of tune with reality, so phantasmagoric, that it seems almost to derive from one of those reality-distorting concoctions with a puzzling acronym, like LSD or PCP. More probably, though, victims have been deceived by a more accessible form of pernicious mind candy, one with initials like NPR, NYT, or CNN.

c

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MAY 2000/15

Color Me Kweisi

The NAACP Marches Into Irrelevance

by William Murchison



Patrick Fitzgerald

For a quick fix on how a particular organization sees itself and its purposes, inspect its official name, especially if the organization dates from a more forthright and transparent time, when assorted reformers wore their hearts on their letterheads. The purpose, the *raison d'être*, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, founded in the last month of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, is—well, what else would it be? To “advance”—to push forward, aggressively but lawfully—the interests of Americans who in former times called themselves “colored” and have come to prefer “black” or “African-American.”

I know it is an obvious point. I raise it just to show how little sense it would make to expect the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to spend time and resources “advancing” the Celtic or Hispanic or Albanian interest. Or, for that matter, the interests of plain old unhyphenated Africans (although the NAACP, as self-designated voice of the diaspora, gives occasional lip service to the concerns of the homeland).

Inevitably, and you might even say commendably, the NAACP performs the job it believes its charter stipulates. But it would hardly be honest to let the matter rest right there—not with all that is going on now at the NAACP under President Kweisi Mfume.

William Murchison is a nationally syndicated columnist for the Dallas Morning News.

Whatever the NAACP believes itself to be doing, whatever noble objectives its officers and board may profess, the question arises: Can the organization any longer see the forest for the trees? What is the desired effect here—a stronger America, in which equal rights for all are strongly affirmed; or an America fractured beyond repair, one in which the NAACP raises money like crazy, getting its name in all the papers, while millions of “colored people” fall farther and farther behind?

Just to raise such questions is tricky. There is the history of the civil-rights movement to consider, and especially the provocations that the NAACP faced for decades. Explaining away “the N-Double-A-C-P” as “a bunch of outside agitators” was *de rigueur* in the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* South. Various NAACPers may have hailed from the outside, and all may have been agitating to beat the band. But the upshot of their varied labors, and of many other people's—the sweeping away of laws preventing general enjoyment of U.S. citizenship—was needful and beneficial. It helped to assuage many a white Southern conscience, I can tell you.

That as late as the 1950's “colored people” could not eat in “white” restaurants is a datum hard to take in—hard even for eyes that once looked on the old order with complacency or satisfaction. The “Jim Crow” system was absurd and often enough vicious. To point out just one absurdity: It would have denied Mr. Justice Clarence Thomas—whose right hand I saw wrung off a year or two ago by dozens of staunchly conservative Dallas

whites—the privilege of chowing down at a Dallas McDonald's. Thomas would have had to have some white boss man—maybe a do-good liberal—bring him his burger outside. To think of it is to shiver.

But, as we know, Jim Crow fell apart in the 60's—pushed from outside, dismantled from within. (Dallas's business community, not the federal courts, ended segregation in local public accommodations, including burger joints.) Where does that leave the NAACP? Laboring to rekindle its purpose—effecting further advancement of “colored people.” But what does “advancement” mean in an age without legal barriers to the general enjoyment of human rights?

Not a single Jim Crow law remains on the statute books. Lynching—one such event, in Springfield, Illinois, in 1908, helped launch the NAACP—is unknown today. (James Byrd's murder-by-dragging in rural Texas, at the hands of three yahoos, hardly meets the legal definition of lynching.) On marches the NAACP anyway. Its public expects no less, and in fact probably expects more, due to money and sex scandals that several years ago brought down the organization's gravy-train-riding leadership.

In, as president, came Maryland Congressman Kweisi Mfume, determined to revitalize the NAACP in its arthritic old age. If ever a man demonstrated the principle of upward mobility in the post-Jim Crow era, that man would be Mfume—known in his street-hustling, numbers-gaming youth as Frizzell “Pee Wee” Gray. Reformed, scrubbed up, and educated, Pee Wee became Kweisi Mfume—or, as they supposedly say in West Africa, Conquering Son of Kings. Eventually, he was elected to Congress from Baltimore.

As the new moniker implies, Mfume is no shrinking violet. Not unlike the new leader of another semi-comatose liberal organization—John Sweeney of the AFL-CIO—Mfume wants to turn things around in a big way. The NAACP, he says, “had gotten comfortable, fat and lazy, living off a history long since removed.” Time for change!

Well, sure—but what kind of change? What does Mfume believe today's African-Americans need? Lots of things, it would seem. Near the top of the list: *not* seeing the Confederate battle flag flapping over South Carolina's statehouse—a deep affront, as the NAACP depicts it, to black sensibilities; an ugly reminder of an ugly past.

As mop-up operations in the civil-rights struggle go, this one takes prizes for irrelevance. Jobs? Health? Education? Crime? Never mind the daily frustrations of black children left semi-educated, or even less than semi-, by teacher-union members of John Sweeney's labor coalition. Never mind illegitimacy and family breakup in the black community. Or the drug problem. Or AIDS.

No, sir—never mind! The job at hand is to get that flag lowered—that symbol, in Mfume's words, of “the most reprehensible aspects of American history.” Actually, as Mfume seems to visualize it, the overriding need of blacks is to see proud South Carolina noses rubbed in the dirt. Take that for Fort Sumter! This would obviously inspire whites and blacks to throw brotherly arms around each other and drive off together into the sunset, headed for the NASCAR races.

To further the campaign for brotherly love, and to make its point about getting the “rebel” flag down, the NAACP last January 1 began a boycott of South Carolina. The idea is to steer an estimated \$280 million in spending to out-of-state destina-

tions. No tips for black waiters and cab drivers; no chance for local black leaders to mix and mingle with out-of-state dignitaries and visitors at conventions of the National Urban League and the National Governors Association. Not while *that flag* waves over the capitol!

Another notable Mfume campaign, resulting in what the NAACP will certainly depict as victory, targeted the television networks. Mfume wanted more blacks on camera as well as off. Network representatives sat down with the NAACP to see what could be worked out. The agreement with ABC is typical: grants to discover and support new writing and directing talent, steps to expand the pool of available network on-air positions, more contracts with black-owned businesses. Fox plans to place a minority writer on all its network productions. And so on.

Everybody and his dog sues everybody else these days, for both social and economic gain. Originally, the NAACP made its name in the courts. Why not go back to the well? So we have the NAACP suing the Adam's Mark Hotel in Daytona, Florida, for discrimination against guests attending the annual Black College Reunion. Mfume also is challenging what he calls a corporate pattern of discrimination at Adam's Mark: less desirable rooms and higher prices for blacks. A similar lawsuit takes aim at Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc.

Kweisi Mfume's America is a nation that simply cannot repent enough. Jim Crow may be planted in the cold, cold ground. Nevertheless, if we are going to have an NAACP, it has got to raise money and hell alike.

Speaking of “aim,” there has to be—there just has to be—a class-action suit concerning guns. Sure enough, the NAACP is suing 100 gun manufacturers, 24 of them foreign. “We represent,” says Mfume, “a significant constituency that is disproportionately affected by gun violence”: which violence seems to be the fault of those who manufacture the weapons rather than those who shoot them at Mfume's constituents.

Moreover, just in case the federal bench should fail to heed such striking claims, Mfume has a fallback plan: He proposes a deal with the U.S. Supreme Court, whereby the Court expands the number of clerkships available to women and minorities, whom he obviously expects to agitate for NAACP positions. To make his point, Mfume led a big demonstration outside the Court, successfully getting himself arrested.

It's the old days all over again, Kweisi Mfume might suppose. But of course it really isn't. Jim Crow lies six feet under, and “colored people” have a variety of challenges not easily susceptible of solution in the old manner: boycotts, lawsuits, and so on.

One looks at what the NAACP is trying to do, and one says: Huh? For instance: Television may employ relatively few blacks. On the other hand, that is not necessarily television's

fault. TV may be the paradigmatic money-grubbing institution of our day. Show TV producers a connection between higher profits and more effective outreach to supporters of the NAACP, and Hollywood will beat down Kweisi Mfume's door.

What Mfume does not acknowledge is that you can work out deals on paper, but only the marketplace can ratify the terms of those deals. If the marketplace says, boy, oh, boy, those affirmative-action guys from the NAACP (because that is what they are) are terrific—then the rest takes care of itself. Endless vistas of blue sky. On the other hand, if the marketplace does not—well, let's get down to specifics—ratify a program with the approved mix of black and white characters or black and white ideas, then the audience will nix said program. And whatcha gonna do about it? Boycott the audience?

A corollary point: Educational preparation may not be everything, but those who get it enjoy an edge over their competitors. Why in the world wouldn't the NAACP want those African-Americans it dispatches to white-dominated fields, e.g., television and constitutional law, to go there carrying the best and sharpest educational tools available? Here again, the marketplace rules. Kweisi Mfume cannot hold your hand forever.

Yet the NAACP's interest in raising and maintaining educational standards, if it exists, is indiscernible. Ideological zeal demands opposition to vouchers and private schools and deep suspicion of rigorously enforced standards of performance. What a broad, smooth road to irrelevance: Ignore the way the world operates; posit a counter-reality; insist on the pureness and eternal validity of that reality.

America is still a mostly free country. You can believe what you want. Left alone to lean heavily on a phantasm, just do not be surprised, or too angry, when in broad daylight the thing goes

poof, and into the dust you go tumbling.

Kweisi Mfume's America is a nation that simply cannot repent enough, now or, seemingly, ever. Jim Crow may be planted in the cold, cold ground. Nevertheless, if we are going to have an NAACP, it has got to raise money and hell alike. It needs, in consequence, a Righteous Cause. The "rebel" flag will do in a pinch. The gun companies will do. Adam's Mark? Great.

By the way, not five minutes ago I had a conversation that strikes me as somewhat to the point. A middle-aged Ethiopian-born man who delivers mail in our building recently became a U.S. citizen. He is one of the gentlest, most decent people I know, and I relish his friendship. The day he took the oath, he came to work in a red, white, and blue vest and necktie and brought his papers by to show me. He has a son completing medical residency and a daughter still in community college. A couple of us were chatting with him in the hall. Some American blacks do not accept him as black, he said. His ancestors did not work the plantations; he himself lacks the legacy of white oppression. That is what makes you black—because, if I may interpolate, Kweisi Mfume says so, and that's the law and the prophets.

My friend soldiers on, with humility and good cheer. He wants to be an American: the old-fashioned variety. And I say, God bless him, because he will make it. Theoretically blacker blacks, who take their cues from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and who cannot let the past go because hurting makes them feel so good—to these, various things need saying, mostly for their own sake.

The most direct piece of advice that comes to mind may be the most useful: Get a life. c

Plea Denied

by *Richard Moore*

At dawn
to memories of crime,
"Begone!"
I screamed. "Some other time!
Save your disgusting onset
till sunset."

"Your faults
cry now," they thundered, "roar
and waltz
wild on your ballroom floor
because you need to suffer,
you duffer.

"Come, knit
us nicely in your song.
We'll fit.
You cannot get along
(so don't you dare to flout us)
without us."

Reactionary Radicals

RADICAL REACTIONARIES

Tale of a “Seditionist”

The Story of Lawrence Dennis

by Justin Raimondo



Lawrence Dennis was an outsider in a movement of outsiders, a unique and largely solitary figure whose career as a writer—and notorious “seditionist”—embodies the tragedy and bravery of the Old Right, the pre-World War II “America First” generation of conservative intellectuals and activists. In many important ways, Dennis is the prototype of modern “paleo-conservatives.” His career as a controversialist and the leading American nationalist intellectual of his time charts the rise and fall of the Old Right—and, perhaps, holds a lesson for us today.

Born in Atlanta in 1893, Dennis had what historian Justus Doenecke describes as “a varied career,” which included a stint as a “boy evangelist.” In 1901, after the death of his father, the eight-year-old Dennis traveled to Europe with his mother, where he became conversant in French and German. After four years, he returned to America, a young cosmopolitan. His mother envisioned him in the pulpit, but Dennis was meant for other things. He applied to Exeter, an incubator of the elite, and was accepted. “Before that,” he recalled, “I had never been to college; I had never been to school.” He had no formal schooling, “although I had plenty of education.” Young Dennis entered Harvard in 1915. When Eastern bankers and an Anglophile fifth column succeeded in dragging us into the European war, he joined the Army and was sent to Brest, France, where he was put in charge of a company of military police. He returned to Harvard and earned his degree in 1920: two years of prep school, a little over two years of college, and he stepped readily into the elite circles he had somehow penetrated as a member of the U.S. diplomatic corps.

That Dennis did not really belong in those circles is only hinted at in the remarkably oblique interview he gave, in 1967, to William Keylor for the Columbia University Oral History Collection. While the leftist Keylor attempted to indict him for sedition all over again, asking about William Dudley Pelley, Father Coughlin, and the German-American Bund, the subtext of Dennis’s recollection of his life is that of an outsider “passing” for an insider—and doing a remarkably good job of it. His answers, when asked about his early life, and especially his relationship with his parents, are revealing for what they do not say. Dennis never names his parents and never even claims that they were married. When Keylor asks him about his mother’s influence on his politics, Dennis not only denies any influence but declares: “I never had much association with her after I passed fourteen or even thirteen.” She lived in Washington, D.C., and sent him “about \$100 a month.” How Dennis had

the money to attend Exeter and Harvard, without any formal education or family connections, is a mystery.

When the State Department sent Dennis to Haiti, where the U.S. army of occupation was enforcing stability at gunpoint, he was really in his element. As the assistant to the minister, an old “New Orleans aristocrat,” he had “the run of the town.” This meant he belonged to the American Club, where he socialized with other diplomats and military personnel, and he also was a fixture at the Haitian Club, or Cercle Belle Vue, owned by a German who had married a Haitian—an octoroon, of course—and the whole thing was “a very broadening experience,” said Dennis. “I was on both sides of the fence.” This theme of duality, of cultural ambidexterity, continued after he was assigned to the American legation to Romania: “There again I played both sides of the street. I went to Romanian parties and I also went to Jewish parties. The Romanians were very anti-Jewish and wouldn’t take a Jew into any of their clubs. But I went to the best Jewish club there,” he said. “I played both sides of the street and I got along very happily.”

In 1927, Dennis resigned from the diplomatic service in protest against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, and became an economic consultant to various investment banking firms with Latin American interests. He had served as the American troubleshooter in Nicaragua, and the experience made him a confirmed opponent of foreign loans south of the border and of a foreign policy in which American gunships were dispatched by New York banks to make good on their bad investments. He burst on the national scene in 1930, in a series of articles for the *New Republic* in which he exposed the foreign-bond racket and predicted that the bubble was about to burst. Dennis’s first book, *Is Capitalism Doomed?* (1932), established him as a much more acerbic and perceptive critic of capitalism than any of the leftist ideologues who threw their lot in with Marxism.

Unlike the Marxists, Dennis protested that his critique of capitalism was “not destructive.” In the midst of the Great Depression, he sought to “prolong and render more pleasant the old age of capitalism.” The system was caught in a dilemma: With no new worlds to conquer, and no new markets, there was no way for the profit motive to lead us out of the crisis. “In its old age, a senile capitalism must be nurtured by the state, not with war profits, necessarily, but on an even diet of 2 percent gruel.” Powerless to create markets for itself, decrepit capitalism must depend on the state to keep the masses from idleness. It is either that or war: “Keeping six to eight million men unemployed,” he warned, “is the best known way to prepare for war. The day a war starts somewhere in the world, millions of

Justin Raimondo writes from San Francisco.



Lawrence Dennis, from the dustcover of *Operational Thinking for Survival*.

unemployed . . . will heave a grateful sigh of relief. As American business picks up, American idealism will get acquainted with the moral issue of the New Armageddon and history will repeat itself."

Ten years before James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution*, Dennis argued that capitalism was doomed and that something that was neither socialism nor capitalism would take its place. He saw himself as an observer, an objective commentator on trends that had their own internal dynamic. Technological and social changes had revolutionized the old order, and laissez faire was no longer viable. But the Soviet Union was not necessarily the wave of the future; as an alternative to Marxism, Dennis held out the prospect of a distinctively American nationalism. His program for ameliorating the crisis of market senility included protective tariffs, anti-monopoly legislation, restrictions on credit, and a return to small-scale production for a domestic market.

Unlike Burnham and other prophets of modernity, Dennis did not exult in the triumph of the new order; his elegy for the Old Republic was touched with nostalgia for a lost world. "The point of view of this book," he wrote, "is not unlike that which a citizen of Rome might have taken a century or so before the fall of the empire. He would not have regretted the doom of prevailing leaders, but he would have been saddened by the contemplation of the loss of many of the values of Roman civilization." For Dennis, "the opening of an era of economic dictatorships will be tantamount to the revival of the Dark Ages."

Dennis developed this theme in *The Coming American Fascism* (1936), a title that did not describe the author's ideology so much as his predicament. If the choice was between an American corporate state and an American Soviet, Dennis chose the former as more humane: "This was preferable, he argued, to the liquidation of America's kulaks. Owing allegiance to no party

or "ism," Dennis saw himself as an objective "student, observer and interpreter of current trends" who steered a middle course between the Scylla of Marxist socialism and the Charybdis of economic chaos. The only alternative to war, he argued, was a political and spiritual renewal of the ruling elite at the helm of a centralized state. The revolution against finance capital was already here, and the only choice was whether it would be Marxist or native American.

In opting for the latter, Dennis called his system "fascism," but this was confusing to his readers and, later, injurious to his own career and reputation. He never advocated a one-party state, but saw political repression as uniquely European and unlikely to take root in America.

Dennis developed his thesis still further in *The Dynamics of War and Revolution* (1940): Roosevelt's drive to war was fueled by the need to get the nation out of the Great Depression. With the frontier gone, the crisis of capitalism could only be resolved in a new corporatism at home or war abroad. The irony, he pointed out, was that the United States would "go fascist fighting Fascism." Roosevelt's war-time dictatorship would "solve" the problem of unemployment by paving the way for national socialism, American-style. But Dennis argued that there was a less bloody, less brutal way to accomplish the same ends—and still preserve the values unique to the American character.

While differing with Dennis's domestic prescription, Freda Uteley expressed the hope that his views would be evaluated objectively, in the same spirit in which they were given. It was a vain hope: the left reacted with anger and fear—and eventually the "mailed fist of the state."

Max Lerner, the arbiter of fellow-traveling liberalism and the loudest drumbeater for war, attacked Dennis as a "barbarian" and decreed that no self-respecting liberal could have truck with him. Dennis's dictum that fascism was just another variant of socialism hit Lerner too close to home. The Communist Party—temporarily antiwar because of the Hitler-Stalin Pact—billed Dennis as "the Leader of Fascism in America" and an "American Hitler." It did not matter that there was no trace of racism or antisemitism in Dennis's works: William Z. Foster, the mini-Stalin of the American Communist Party, averred that Dennis had to "soft-pedal anti-Semitism and anti-Negroism, which are organic to his fascist thesis," so as "not to arouse the antagonism of the workers by talking plainly on this matter."

For Dennis to be anointed leader of a racist fifth column in America was just another irony in a life rich with them. For Dennis hardly fit the Aryan mold. Charles A. Lindbergh, for whom Dennis is said to have written a few speeches, described him as having a "rugged," dark-complexioned look that made him seem as if he would be more at home at a frontier trading post. Dennis's archenemy, the notorious *agent provocateur* John Roy Carlson, noted that "Dennis' hair is woolly, dark and kinky. The texture of his skin is unusually dark and the eyes of Hitler's intellectual keynoter of 'Aryanism' are a rich deep brown, his lips fleshy." The mystery of his parentage and the subtle racial subtext of his playing "both sides of the street," combined with rumors that have persisted through the years, point to the probability that Lawrence Dennis was of mixed race. In Dennis's youth, the ministry was a major entrance point into the black middle class. Of his days as a "boy evangelist," he merely says, "I got over that." But Carlson's dig at Dennis was deadly accurate: The man *Life* magazine called, in a picture caption, "America's No. 1 intellectual Fascist . . . brain-

truster for the forces of appeasement” was almost certainly an African-American.

The revelation of Dennis’s ethnicity is unlikely to rehabilitate him in liberal quarters—quite the contrary. Liberals were deaf then to his argument that Anglo-American policy “assume[d] that certain races like the Germans and Japanese can be treated as we treat the negroes or the British treat the darker races under their rule,” and they are unlikely to be convinced at this late date. The notion that “Germans can no more enjoy equality of opportunity in a liberal, capitalistic Anglo-Saxon world order than negroes can enjoy equality in white America” so enraged liberals that they determined to shut him up for good.

Carlson’s book *Under Cover*, published in 1943, was a key element of a campaign to criminalize opposition to the President’s war plans. Working as an “undercover agent” in the America First movement while on the payroll of such groups as the “Friends of Democracy,” Carlson posed as the publisher of an antisemitic rag, the *Christian Defender*, and spread race hate in the name of “exposing” it. Quoting a fanciful conversation with Dennis verbatim, Carlson depicted him as the intellectual Svengali of the Nazi fifth column, the link between America First and the pro-Nazi fringe; his book was essentially a dramatization of the charges filed by the Justice Department against Dennis and 27 other defendants in the mass Sedition Trial of 1944.

The trial had its genesis in early 1941. At the close of a Cabinet meeting, FDR took Attorney General Francis J. Biddle aside. After the others had left, the President took out a packet and laid on the table a number of pamphlets, newspapers, and leaflets. It was a miscellaneous assortment of literature denouncing the President as a warmonger and calling for his impeachment.

The President leaned forward in his chair and asked, “What are you going to do about this?”

“Mr. President,” replied Biddle, “nothing can be done.”

The attorney general, who came from a distinguished Virginia family—his mother’s ancestors included John Randolph of Roanoke and Edmund Randolph, the first attorney general of the United States—may have been under the illusion that he was still living in a free country. The President quickly disabused him of that quaint notion, shouting across the table: “I want something done about these cases—and you go ahead and do it!”

For months on end, the President bullied Biddle in Cabinet meetings, demanding to know, “when are you going to indict the seditionists?” The attorney general patiently explained that it was necessary to build a case. As Biddle put it in his memoirs, FDR “was not much interested in the theory of sedition, or in the constitutional right to criticize the government in wartime. He wanted this antiwar talk stopped.”

William Power Maloney, a left-wing New York lawyer and ardent New Dealer, was put in charge of the investigation. By the summer of 1941, Maloney began to round up the “suspects” and call witnesses, including Carlson and scores of isolationist and “far-right” activists, from the prominent to the obscure. In the summer of 1942, the President finally stopped badgering the befuddled Biddle: The first indictment was handed down, naming 28 individuals. A second indictment, handed down in January of the following year, expanded the scope of the case, naming five more individuals, 30 publications, and 26 organizations, including the America First Committee, the National

Committee to Keep America Out of Foreign Wars, the *Constitutional Educational League Bulletin*, and *Scribner’s Commentator*.

A cooperative judge, E.C. Eichner, a former Democratic congressman and 100-percent New Dealer, was lined up. There was only one problem: The government had no case, and Biddle knew it. Sen. Burton K. Wheeler (D-MT), who had stood up to pro-war mobs as a county attorney during World War I, stormed into Biddle’s office and threatened a congressional investigation of the department’s misconduct. Biddle reined in Maloney, replaced him with another prosecutor (over the President’s protests), and dropped the America First Committee and the more mainstream conservative groups from the indictment. However, he added eight more individuals and scores of publications—including Lawrence Dennis, *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, and Dennis’s *Weekly Foreign Letter*, which had continued to blast away at FDR’s war mania after Pearl Harbor.

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hardly fit the Aryan mold.

The defendants were a diverse lot who had only one belief in common: their opposition to the idea that it was the moral duty of the United States to go to war with Germany in order to save the British and Soviet empires. Some, like Elizabeth Dilling, author of *The Red Network*, were militant anticommunists; others, like William Dudley Pelley, organizer of the Silver Shirts, were antisemitic agitators; others, such as Dennis, were isolationists or nationalists. Some were simply crackpots who represented a threat to no one but themselves.

A “conspiracy” hatched by defendants with only the most tenuous affiliation had to be a conspiracy of *ideas*: As Dennis and Maximilian St. George, one of the defense lawyers in the case, put it in their book, *A Trial on Trial* (1945), the case marked “a trend toward application here in America of the theories and practices of the totalitarian states, in which people are tried, convicted and often sentenced to death for having been on the losing side in a political fight.” The key to understanding the meaning of the trial, and the motives of its sponsors, was a full-page advertisement placed by Freedom House in the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* on January 30, 1943, declaring: “First, we must win the war. Second, we must destroy isolationism forever.”

From the beginning, Dennis insisted that the government had no case. As the trial dragged on, the mountain of “evidence” amassed by prosecutor O.J. Rogge amounted to nothing more than the various public statements of the defendants—leaflets, articles, books, and speeches. The jury, the defense lawyers, and the defendants, all wilting under this daily bombardment, developed a sense of camaraderie and began to think of themselves as fellow prisoners of the prosecutor’s elaborate

delusions. In the lunchroom, the jurors, freely mingling with the defendants, were often heard to complain that they still had no idea what the case was all about.

Dennis set the tone for the defense in his two-hour opening statement, pointing out that the evidence—the defendants' opposition to the war—did not fit the charge, which was that their actions were designed to “counsel, urge and cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny and refusal of duty by members of the military and naval forces of the United States.” None of the defendants had ever been in touch with members of the Armed Forces, and no attempt was made to show otherwise. The prosecution claimed in the indictment that the defendants had “disseminated . . . oral, written, and printed statements . . . asserting among other things that in substance: democracy is decadent,” and that “the acts, proclamations, and orders of the public officials of the United States and the laws of Congress are illegal, corrupt, traitorous and in direct violation of the Constitution of the United States.” Among their crimes was the view that “President Roosevelt is reprehensible, a warmonger, liar, unscrupulous,” and entirely the servant of “Communists and Plutocrats.” In short, the defendants had dared to tell the truth about FDR, who was now the virtual dictator of the country, and for that they would pay a high price.

The price would be higher for some. The elderly Elmer J. Garner—editor of *Publicity*, one of the proscribed publications—met his maker just as the trial got under way; he died with 40 cents in his pocket. Others, such as Dennis, had even more to lose. Before the Sedition Trial of 1944, he had always found a platform for his views; after it was over, he was relegated to the margins and virtually forgotten, except to be dredged up by his old enemies every once in a while as an example of unreconstructed evil. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., depicted Dennis as having “Goebbels-like qualities” because he was “clever, glib and trenchant”—but “Goebbels-like” more truly describes the quality and character of the propaganda campaign unleashed against Dennis and the other defendants. Rogge smeared Dennis as “the Alfred Rosenberg of the Nazi Fifth Column in the U.S.,” although the only evidence presented against him was the fact that his books and articles had been quoted seven times in the publications of the German-American Bund.

With the whole weight of public opinion, the media, and the system of legalized repression bearing down on his shoulders, Dennis went on the offensive. Against a charge of conspiracy, most lawyers would deny that their client was part of any such conspiracy. But from his opening statement, Dennis challenged the central premise of the prosecution: Such a conspiracy, he asserted, had never existed. The Nazi party, unlike the Soviet, was not an international movement; there was a Comintern, but no Nazintern, for the simple reason that German national socialism was a strictly nationalist ideology, without any real appeal outside of a Greater Germany. There never was a Nazi fifth column of any significance in the United States—although there was, as recent work by historians such as Thomas F. Mahl has revealed, a substantial and influential British fifth column in this country run directly by British intelligence.

Most of the defendants, too poor to hire legal counsel, had been assigned separate lawyers by the court. These draftees were naturally resentful that they had been conscripted to represent clients who could not pay, and after the trial had dragged on for weeks, without the government presenting even a scintilla of real evidence, this resentment began to boil over. Inspired

and organized by the combative Dennis, the defense rallied—and turned the tables. They objected to the introduction of every single piece of irrelevant evidence—all of them, singly and in unison. They filed motions to impeach the judge, and several were admonished from the bench: Two were thrown out of court. The paper tiger Rogge and his political police crumbled under their combined assault. Judge Eichner pounded his gavel almost continuously, as if to drown out the rising chorus of protests—not only from the defense lawyers but from the media, which demanded to know why he had permitted the defendants to turn his courtroom into a circus. As historian Wayne S. Cole put it, the defense “exhausted his energies, his skills, and his health.”

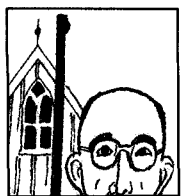
On November 30, 1944, Judge Eichner spent all day fuming because the defendants were defiantly addressing envelopes stuffed with copies of a speech by Sen. William Langer (R-ND) demanding their release, and he contemplated citing them all—including Langer—for contempt of court. He decided to sleep on it—and never woke up. With the death of Eichner, a mistrial was declared: Much to the dismay of the *Daily Worker* and Dorothy Thompson, the case was never retried.

Dennis returned to a semblance of the life he had known. His *Weekly Foreign Letter* was revived under a new title, the *Appeal to Reason*, which was published until very near the end of his long life. (He died in 1977.) But the trial had devastated him financially and spiritually. Many intellectuals, writers, and activists suffered greatly as a result of the anti-isolationist purge of the professions, including John T. Flynn, Gareth Garrett, Albert Jay Nock, Frank Chodorov, publicist Joe Kamp, and actress Lillian Gish. But none suffered as much as Dennis, who was left virtually penniless by the ordeal and only survived due to the support of those few who admired his work. The *Appeal to Reason*, with fewer than 900 subscribers, nonetheless reached an influential circle of conservative activists and politicians, the hard core of the dwindling Old Right.

In the *Appeal* and in his 1967 book, *Operational Thinking for Survival*, Dennis surveyed the political landscape with the same penetrating vision that had informed his earlier writing. As the most consistent and uncompromising of all the old isolationists, he opposed every step in the escalation of the Cold War. In 1946, he wrote that the elites required “a war unity against foreign devils. Yesterday it was Hitler; soon it will be Stalin.” He was right. Having been the victim of a political frame-up, he disdained McCarthy and the “anti-red squealers” and “neurotic, nutty apostates” who were leading the new crusade.

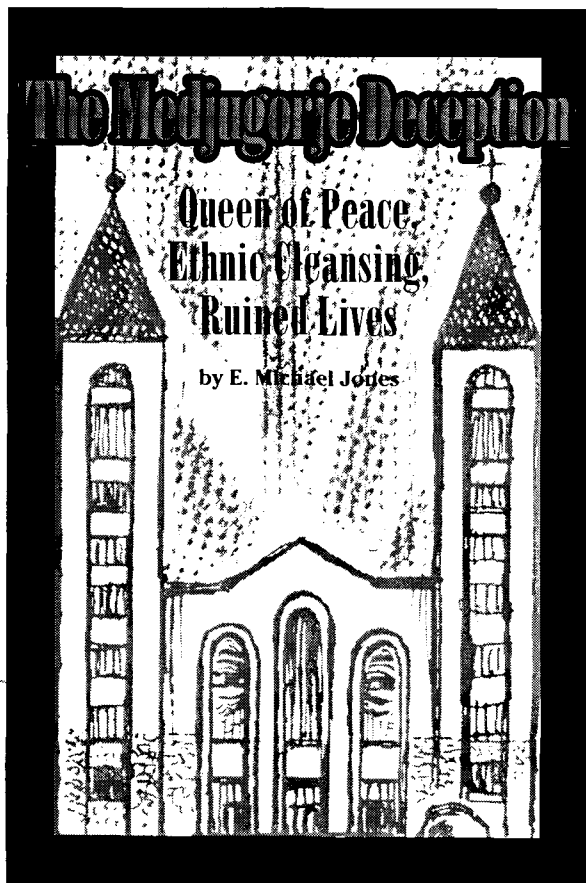
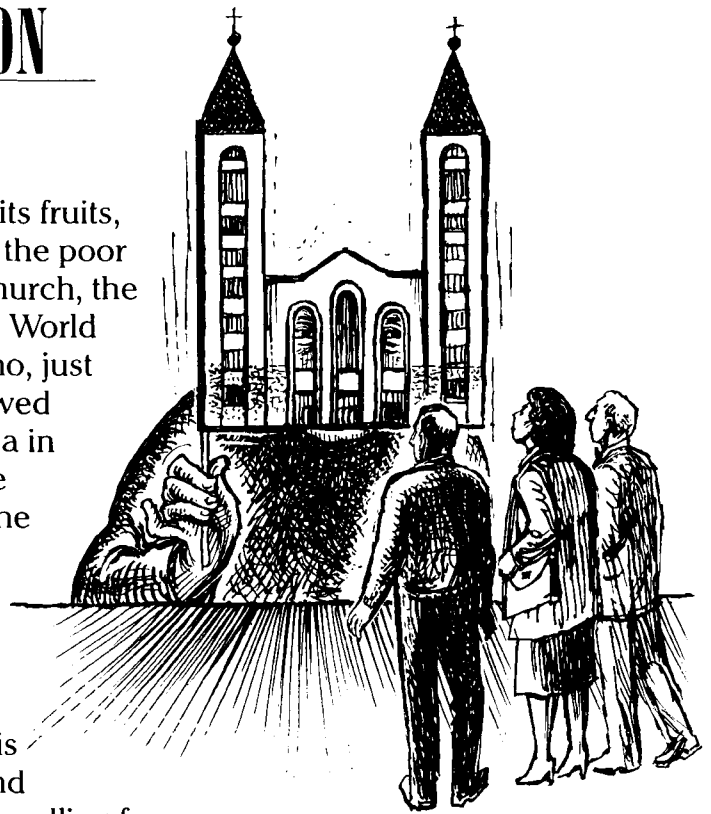
By the sheer logic of his utterly uncompromising “isolationism” and his view of war as the great collectivizer, Dennis reverted to an earlier belief in laissez faire. Militarism was at the core of the new American socialism: The military was “the most socialist institution of the State in America today,” he wrote at the height of the Cold War. The liberal internationalists who were calling for a holy war against Soviet Russia would turn this country into a “socialist society by conscription, controls and rationing.” At the end of his life, the “Alfred Rosenberg of America’s Fifth Column” was preaching peace and denouncing the growth of a “police garrison state.”

Dennis deserves far better than the smears of the court historians. Once rescued from the likes of John Roy Carlson and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., his legacy will enrich and inspire a new generation of the American right.



THE MEDJUGORJE DECEPTION

Proponents of Medjugorje like to talk about its fruits, but ignore the broken families, the pregnant nuns, the poor people bilked of their money, the division in the Church, the de facto schism, the worst fighting in Europe since World War II, the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from Gradno, just five kilometers from Medjugorje — all which followed inexorably from those children on that hill in Bosnia in June of 1981. *The Medjugorje Deception* breaks the conspiracy of silence that has surrounded one of the biggest hoaxes of the 20th century. It tells the full truth from beginning to end, from the bloody atrocities during World War II on the other side of Apparition Hill to their bloody sequel in the ethnic cleansing of Mostar's Muslims with money raised by Medjugorje groups. *The Medjugorje Deception* is more than a book; it's a spiritual work of mercy, and it's available now for \$19.95 plus \$3 shipping and handling from Fidelity Press.



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"All the News
Unfit to Print"

Signs of the Times

Vol. 2 No. 5

May 2000

The nostalgic should derive some comfort from the knowledge that, in one respect at least, the 1930's are back: Dr. Joseph Goebbels is alive and well, and living in Atlanta. According to the Dutch daily *Trouw* (February 21), CNN employed military specialists in "psychological operations" (psyops) disguised as journalists during the Kosovo war:

"Psyops personnel, soldiers and officers, have been working in CNN's headquarters in Atlanta through our program *Training With Industry*," said Major Thomas Collins of the U.S. Army Information Service . . . "They worked as regular employees of CNN. Conceivably, they would have worked on stories during the Kosovo war. They helped in the production of news."

Trouw points out that this revelation raises serious doubts about CNN's journalistic integrity and independence. The military personnel belonged to the Fourth Psychological Operations Group, stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and charged with spreading "selected information." CNN proved evasive at first: "I don't believe that we would employ military personnel; it doesn't seem like something we would normally do," said CNN spokeswoman Megan Mahoney.

But when the U.S. Army Information Service confirmed the news, Mahoney said she would have to contact CNN's senior officials. However, on Sunday evening CNN still could not provide an official statement to *Trouw*.

Trouw concludes by pointing out that CNN has been accused of being "one-sided, overly emotional, over-simplified and relying too heavily on NATO officials." WorldNetDaily.com, commenting on the story and a subsequent report by Geoff Metcalf on their website, remarked that

"what CNN and the U.S. military are doing is reminiscent of those dark years in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, when Goebbels kept the masses ignorant and misinformed":

If you still think major media players like CNN are "fair" and "unbiased" and "honest" in the way they present the news, you're hopeless. . . . [T]hat concept—"presenting the news"—is revealing in and of itself. Goebbels "presented the news" to the German people; the German press did not "report" it. Now we know that—at least when it comes to military adventures that are likely less than popular with the American people—CNN, with Uncle Sam's help, is also "presenting the news" rather than reporting it. Just like Goebbels.

Those psyops soldiers need to try harder if they want us all to think politically correct thoughts: According to a NewsMax.com/Zogby poll released on March 2, "74% of Americans oppose defending Kosovo militarily," and similar percentages think the United States shouldn't defend Taiwan (69 percent), Israel (59 percent), or South Korea (72 percent).

The NewsMax.com poll results are probably troubling to the Taiwanese government. In the aftermath of Kosovo, the Chinese leadership stepped up its rhetoric regarding Taiwan and, in early March, stated categorically that it would not renounce the use of force to take the island. Yet only 31 percent of Americans said the United States should defend Taiwan. Apparently, the views of the overwhelming majority of Americans don't count with the best Congress money can buy:

Last month, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for closer U.S. military ties between Taiwan and the United States. The Taiwan Relations

Act already states the United States will aid in Taiwan's defense if Taiwan is attacked.

On this issue, don't expect mature, statesmanlike diplomatic poise on either side of the political divide, however. According to *Insight Magazine*, "Casper Weinberger told a meeting on Capitol Hill that 'it might not be wise for America to go to war with China, but it might be necessary.'" Unwise but necessary? What does that mean?

Small wonder that the arms trade is booming all over the world. The only guarantee against becoming the target of some future "humanitarian" campaign is the ability to strike back—hard. Russia's top defense industry official announced on March 7 that Moscow expected to earn at least \$4.3 billion from foreign arms sales this year. While this was taken as a sign of the recovery of Russia's struggling military-industrial complex, world arms sales topped \$55.8 billion in 1998, according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies; half of the sales were made by the United States.

Tolerance toward the tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers stationed in Germany is in danger of snapping after the arrest of three American teenagers for murder. All sons of servicemen at the U.S. base at Darmstadt, the youths, ages 14 to 18, have confessed to throwing rocks onto six cars from an overpass. The attacks caused the deaths of two women and injured five other motorists. "Killer kids from Darmstadt," ran the headline in *Bild*:

Relations between Americans and their German hosts are usually good, perhaps because they have almost nothing to do with each other. But the three boys on Darmstadt's Lincoln Estate evidently found life dull, and while hanging out at the local bowling alley they invented a new game. For weeks they have been going to a nearby motorway and throwing stones at passing cars. It

turned deadly serious on Monday night. The teenagers grabbed 10 rocks, each weighing about 8kg, from a local building site. They launched them from the overpass, cheering each time they scored a hit. Two women driving separate cars died instantly.

Now the boys are under arrest, facing a German trial for murder. The "killer kids" can expect to spend up to ten years in a German jail if convicted. But the funny part is the absence of this story from our own media. Had German teens from the embassy in D.C. murdered Washingtonians on the Beltway in a similar fashion, it would have been headline news, from sea to shining sea.

So who can blame those Europeans who wish to develop a defense structure that is independent of the United States? Britain's *Daily Telegraph* (March 6) reports that the former NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana, who is the present head of security for the European Union, has angered France by trying to end its hopes for a European army. He and his allies within the European Union even:

proposed allowing Nato officials to attend meetings of the EU's new military committees, causing consternation in Paris, where the move is seen as tantamount to handing the new bodies to Washington on a plate. Paris wants to keep the Americans locked out until the new institutions have grown to maturity and established the final blueprint for EU defence integration.

At a summit in Helsinki in December, E.U. leaders vowed to develop by 2003 the ability to deploy up to 60,000 soldiers within 60 days and to sustain that force for up to a year. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has summed up U.S. concerns about the plan in what she calls the "three D's": The European defense initiative must not "decouple" the United States from Europe; it must not "duplicate" NATO structures and capabilities; and it must not "discriminate" against NATO members that do not belong to the European Union.

Mrs. Albright's stock in Europe is somewhat low right now, as even "mainstream" publications have unveiled her

bellicose deviousness in dealings with America's "allies." The *Sunday Telegraph* of London (February 27) is one example:

When news of a massacre in the Kosovan village of Racak reached Washington early last year, Madeleine Albright's reaction was immediate. "Spring has come early," the US Secretary of State told Sandy Berger, the National Security Adviser, after hearing that the corpses of 45 ethnic Albanians had been found following an attack by Serb forces. Ms Albright, one of the West's leading anti-Serb hawks . . . knew that she would have to move quickly to take advantage of the Racak effect. "It was the kind of event we wanted to avoid," she told me. "But the fact that it had happened meant that it had to be a galvanising event and we had to move the Allies as rapidly as we could."

The whole thing was a setup, of course, as our readers have known for a year now. The *Sunday Telegraph's* reporter adds that

Ms Albright and Mr Thaci made their candid admissions to me as I compiled a BBC documentary to mark the first anniversary of a war which the West presented as a moral crusade against ethnic cleansing but which, in reality, was rather more complex . . . Even on the North Atlantic Council, Nato's governing body, there was profound scepticism about rebel intentions. Confidential minutes taken by one member nation on November 13, 1998, speak of the KLA as "the main initiator of the violence which is threatening the ceasefire arrangements."

But the Americans took a firm line:

Three days after Racak Ms Albright persuaded President Clinton to promise that US troops would be part of a peacekeeping force in the event of a political agreement. She then began to work on the European allies. They

wanted another round of diplomacy. She declared bluntly that she had had enough of meetings that did not lead anywhere. "I remember telling the Europeans that I was not going to come to any more meetings where nothing happened until you give me your word that we will have a Nato activation order authorising the threat of the use of force."

The rest, as they say, is history, in which Mrs. Albright's place is assured. So is that of Mr. Milosevic. Very few Western journalists have grasped the essence of the Serbs' drama, squeezed between the hammer of NATO bombs and the anvil of Milosevic's ruthless regime. One exception is Marcus Gee, writing in Canada's *Globe and Mail* (March 1):

An evil lord rules over a poor medieval town. The lord is so cruel to his people, and such a nuisance to his neighbours, that all the nobles of the land band together to overthrow him. There is one problem: None of the nobles are willing to shed a drop of their own blood. So, instead of attacking the lord in his castle, they surround the town and let nothing in or out—no food, no water, no wagons, no people. Eventually, the nobles reason, the townsfolk will be so hungry and poor that they will rise up and overthrow the lord themselves. This, in a nutshell, is the Western plan for unseating Slobodan Milosevic, the evil lord of Serbia. NATO bombed him into pulling out of Kosovo last spring, but it stopped short of toppling him.

Since the end of the Kosovo war last June, the victorious Western allies have tightened the economic noose on Serbia, choking off all legal trade and reducing the Serbian economy to a gasping wreck. Western leaders insist that, as long as Mr. Milosevic is in power, there will be no end to sanctions and no Western help in repairing the billions of dollars in damage from last year's airstrikes.

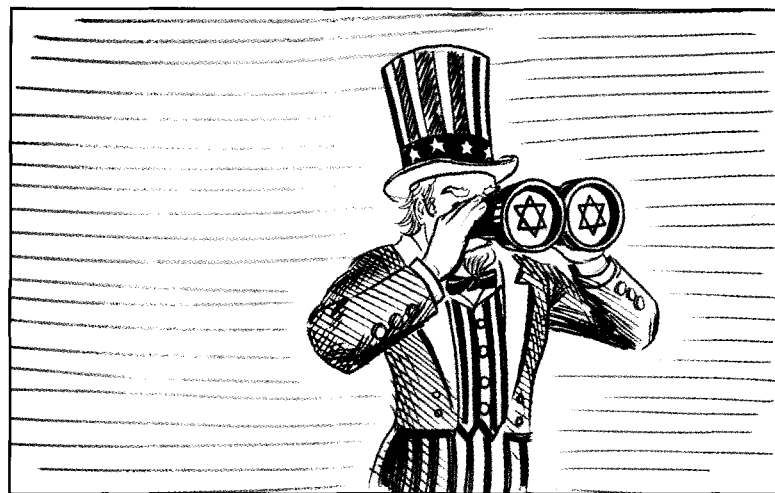
"A crueler and more stupid policy would be hard to imagine," Gee concludes.

The Cost of Holocaust

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"There is no salvation to be extracted from the Holocaust, no faltering Judaism can be revived by it, no new reason for the continuation of the Jewish people can be found in it. If there is hope after the Holocaust, it is because to those who believe, the voice of the Prophets speaks more loudly than did Hitler, and because the divine promise sweeps over the crematoria and silences the voice of Auschwitz."

—Michael Wyschogrod
"Faith and the Holocaust"



The Holocaust in American Life
by Peter Novick
New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.;
373 pp., \$27.00



Almost half of all Americans are unable to locate Mexico on the map, but you do not have to know when the Nazi holocaust occurred to notice that the further that event recedes in time, the more overwhelmingly it looms upon the American scene. Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* is an attempt at explaining why.

From World War II until the mid-1960's, neither the holocaust nor the state of Israel loomed large in the American consciousness, Jewish or gentile. Be-

Chilton Williamson, Jr., is the senior editor for books at Chronicles.

fore the war, it escaped no one's attention that the Third Reich was hostile to Jews, but then there seemed to be a lot of other people the regime did not like, too. As the war progressed, rumors and, later, documented stories of antisemitic atrocities surfaced—in the context of a global struggle that ultimately took between 50 and 60 million lives. This, Novick stresses, was the perception of many American Jews, as well as non-Jews. The press, recalling how often it had been duped and manipulated a quarter-century before by the White House and George Creel, was understandably sensitive to the possibilities for exaggeration, while government agencies like the U.S. Office of War Information and the British Ministry of Information hesitated to disseminate such seemingly fantastic stories for fear of forfeiting credibility. By the middle of the war, when authenticated accounts of the mass murder of European Jewry

emerged, these also were accepted in the context of a full decade of Nazi atrocities. To the extent that the Jews' special victimhood was de-emphasized by Allied propagandists, this was due significantly to their governments' desire to portray "free men everywhere" as the object of the Nazi assault—and to Washington's care to avoid the charge of having gone to war on behalf of European Jews and at the behest of American ones. The genocidal program was, of course, all too real. And yet, Novick says,

"the Holocaust," as we speak of it today, was largely a retrospective construction, something that would not have been recognizable to most people at the time. To speak of "the Holocaust" as a distinct entity, which Americans responded to (or failed to respond to) in various ways, is to introduce an anachronism that

stands in the way of understanding contemporary responses.

Since the 1970's, the fashion has been to condemn the British and American war governments for "abandoning" and "writing off" the Jews of Europe—even for "complicity" in murdering them. At the time, a delegation of American Jewish leaders meeting with Franklin Roosevelt apparently thought it unreasonable to ask the President for anything more than a formal warning that those responsible for murdering Jews would be held accountable after the war, while Zionists themselves considered their European coreligionists doomed by unalterable circumstance.

What the liberating armies found as they swept across enemy territory ended all speculation concerning the fate of the Jews by confirming the worst Allied intelligence reports. Even so, once the first international shock had subsided, postwar political vectors worked against invoking—much less exploiting—the holocaust as a separate and distinct enormity. With the nearly immediate onset of the Cold War, the West needed Germany's help in confronting its former ally, the Soviet Union. The enemy was now "totalitarianism," understood as a system of political repression rather than genocide; consequently, the liquidation of the Jews was presented as a crime committed not by the German people but rather by a totalitarian regime: "The constant iteration of this theme," Novick explains, "reinforced the already-existing tendency to define the victims of Nazism in political rather than ethnic terms." Yet there was more to it than this. The holocaust of Hiroshima made a greater impression on Americans than did the European holocaust, as a catastrophe that—quite imaginably—might befall them. The aftermath of the Allied victory was an era that celebrated victors, not victims. Contemporary Jewish theologians found no religious significance in the holocaust. Finally, as antisemitism (partly in response to the holocaust) waned in America, American Jews felt more secure, although Jewish leaders felt constrained throughout the 1950's to distance the American Jewish community from the Communist Party. It was in the 50's that Nathan Glazer wrote of the holocaust having little effect on the "inner life of American Jewry," while Norman Podhoretz, in an article titled "The

Intellectual and Jewish Fate," failed even to mention the event. On three separate occasions in the late 40's, a number of important Jewish organizations—including the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Congress—were asked to sponsor a proposed holocaust memorial in New York City. Three times the answer was no, the reason given that "a perpetual memorial to the weakness and defenselessness of the Jewish people" would "not be in the best interests of Jewry."

While "private sorrow" lingered, Novick suggests, it required "official sanction" in order to become a "public communal emblem." Official *encouragement* was what followed after the mid-60's, the catalyst having been the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which presented the holocaust for the first time as a distinct atrocity to the American public and freed American Jews of many of their inhibitions so far as speaking publicly about it went. (Norman Podhoretz, reacting furiously to Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* for the book's banality-of-evil thesis, insisted that "No person could have joined the Nazi party, let alone the S.S., who was not at the very least a vicious anti-Semite; to believe otherwise is to learn nothing about the nature of anti-Semitism . . . [or] the nature of evil.") If Eichmann was the catalyst, however, the proximate cause of the sea change was the Six Day War in the late spring of 1967. Before the war, Israel had not been of particular importance to American Jews; after it the holocaust, in Peter Novick's words, "was suddenly transformed from 'mere,' albeit tragic, history to imminent and terrifying prospect."

On the heels of war, what Novick calls the "Israelization" of American Jews occurred. Israel's victory presented Jews as victors rather than victims and, by balancing the holocaust of a quarter-century before, became a functional part of what Rabbi Jacob Neusner has described as a salvation myth. Reciprocally, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, which began with a series of stunning Israeli reverses, had the opposite effect. By then, Israel had enough enemies in the international community to make American Jews question whether the United States would continue to stand fast as that country's guarantor; to many of these, Israel began to seem comparable to the European Jewish community before World War II. Regarding with trepidation the decline of Israel's standing in the world,

American Jewish leaders concluded that forgetfulness of the holocaust was significantly at fault. The result was the constant invocation, after 1973, of Hitler's pogrom to stifle criticism of Israel (Martin Peretz, the owner of the *New Republic*, accused the United States of "complicity" in the butchery of the Jews). This misuse of history peaked in the late 70's before becoming increasingly implausible throughout the 80's as Israel achieved a commanding position in the Middle East, its security problems attributable less to antisemitism than to its prolonged military rule over a million-and-a-half Palestinians. As Israel's strength increased in the 80's and 90's, the holocaust—that other twin pillar of secular Judaism—became more "centering," as Novick puts it. "[A]s larger numbers of American Jews no longer saw the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in black-and-white terms, the Holocaust offered a substitute symbol of infinitely greater moral clarity."

As the 70's got under way, the Jewish-American leadership had something more on its collective mind than the threat to Israel: It perceived a "new antisemitism" here in the United States. The "golden age" of the Jews in America, Norman Podhoretz claimed, was over. Jews were no longer accepted as equals in American society, where even their physical safety could not be assumed; to Earl Raab, America seemed "inhospitable" and indeed "hostile" toward Jewish Americans. These charges rested substantially on a process of defining deviance upward, by which "antisemitism" became "callous indifference to Jewish concerns" and apprehensions. The proximate occasion for such concern was

RECEIVED WISDOM

Carolina Scots: An Historical and Genealogical Study of Over 100 Years of Immigration
by Douglas F. Kelly
(Dillon, SC: 1739 Publications)

A carefully researched and affectionate look at the experience of the Scots in the Carolinas by a Gaelic-speaking Carolinian, who has won fame as a Reformed theologian. Anyone interested in either the Scots or in the Carolinas should have this book on his shelf.

what Diane Ravitch, writing in *Commentary*, called “The Great School Wars,” fought in New York City over community control of the public schools, and other “vibrations,” picked up by the sensitive antennae of Jewish leaders, that Novick nevertheless describes as “almost laughably trivial,” “a series of anti-Semitic remarks made by a few militant blacks in the late sixties, as the civil rights movement was collapsing into impotence and disarray.” (Podhoretz, in conversation with a journalistic supporter of community control, accused him of wanting to “shove the Jewish people back into the gas ovens.”)

The School Wars were soon nearly as lost to memory as the Wars of the Roses, yet after the late 60’s a change became apparent in the American Jewish community. Jewish philanthropists gave more of their money to Jewish causes, and Jews generally, while remaining Democrats, grew more conservative. Though the “golden age” in reality was more gilded than ever, American Jews began to worry about being “killed by kindness”—meaning intermarriage with gentiles specifically as well as, more broadly, a loss of Jewish identity. The process, of course, fit well with the rise of ethnic consciousness among all minority groups, with the resultant identity politics and the competitive politics of victimhood. In an atmosphere in which *Tikkun* expressed the desire that Jews not be rolled together with the white American majority—even questioning whether Jews are really “white”—the holocaust mushroomed on the American scene as purveyors of holocaust awareness claimed for its victims the status of having experienced a level or type of suffering unique in human history. Jacob Neusner, dismissing this claim as “intellectually vulgar,” protested, “If you know who you are, you don’t have to make statements like that.” To which Novick adds:

In part it may be because many Jews *don’t* know who they are, except insofar as they have a “unique” victim identity, and because the uniqueness of the Holocaust is the sole guarantor of *their* uniqueness.

For whatever reasons, the holocaust has become “sacralized” in the “folk Judaism” of America (particularly among the least observant American Jews),

made the basis of a “mystery religion” in which survivors have assumed the role of priests: a process forwarded by President Carter’s establishment of a holocaust commission in 1977 to commemorate Israel’s 30th birthday, by NBC’s *Holocaust* miniseries (the network’s answer to ABC’s *Roots*) in 1978, and Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*. While the popularity of holocaust material with American Jews to a certain extent needs no explaining, Novick emphasizes that:

its rise to the top of the Jewish agenda was by no means a spontaneous development. More than anything else, it was the consequence of decisions made by communal leaders in response to their appraisals of current communal needs—of what worked in dealing with immediate problems. That the end result . . . would be to put the Holocaust at the center of how Jews understood themselves and wanted others to understand them was neither foreseen nor intended by most of those who set the process in motion.

Like most Jewish religious leaders and scholars, Novick is unable to discern anything “revelational” in the holocaust. Elie Wiesel, among others, insists that it amounts to a “unique” event with “universal” implications. But how, Novick asks, can the holocaust be unique *and* universal at the same time? And how can it be both an illustration and a source of historical lessons? For Novick, the holocaust’s utility in providing instruction for the quotidian world is extremely limited, unless one believes feelings of “awe” and “horror” amount to moral lessons. Oprah Winfrey congratulated herself on having become “a better person” after watching *Schindler’s List*, while many other viewers claimed the film provoked “horror” and “grief” in them. But why, Novick wants to know, are these reactions that need or ought to be drawn from Americans?

In the United States, memory of the Holocaust is so banal, so inconsequential, not memory at all, precisely because it is so uncontroversial, so unrelated to real divisions in American society, so *apolitical*.

The American people bear no responsibility for the holocaust. Yet its treatment

in contemporary culture, Novick suggests, may have the effect of desensitizing Americans to other atrocities and unpleasant events, some of which they *are* answerable for. Observing the original impetus behind the “centering” of the holocaust to have spent itself at least in part, he feels something like relief:

There is a sense in which Emil Fackenheim was right to say that for Jews to forget Hitler’s victims would be to grant him a “posthumous victory.” But it would be an even greater posthumous victory for Hitler were we to tacitly endorse his definition of ourselves as despised pariahs by making the Holocaust the emblematic Jewish experience.

The Holocaust in American Life is a valuable as well as fascinating work; its sole fault, to my mind, is that conceptually it is somewhat free-floating. “The memory of the Holocaust,” Novick suggests,

probably tended to inhibit public criticism of Israel. (The Holocaust made most Americans bend over backward to avoid anything that could be represented, or misrepresented, as anti-Semitism.) But earlier there wasn’t that much criticism of Israel to inhibit; in recent years, criticism hasn’t been that inhibited.

It was at this point—page 166—that I checked the index for the absent names of Patrick J. Buchanan and Joseph Sobran, before coming on the next page to Novick’s observation that:

unlike just about every other issue on which interest groups work to win congressional support—things like abortion, gun control, and affirmative action—there have been no significant forces in the legislative arena opposing [pro-Israeli lobbyists].

Peter Novick, who is himself Jewish, has displayed great courage in engaging this inflammatory subject, and if his account displays occasional lacunae or absence of a critical dimension, the explanation may lie in the author’s closeness to the subject.

Every Secret Thing

by Samuel Francis

"The tone and tendency of liberalism . . . is to attack the institutions of the country under the name of reform and to make war on the manners and customs of the people under the pretext of progress."

—Benjamin Disraeli, "Speech in London"

**The Sword and the Shield:
The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret
History of the KGB**
by Christopher Andrew
and Vasili Mitrokhin
New York: Basic Books;
700 pp., \$32.50

**Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the
Life and Legacy of America's
Most Hated Senator**
Arthur Herman
New York: The Free Press;
404 pp., \$26.00



Patrick Fitzgerald

The collapse of the Soviet Union not only ended the Cold War but initiated a revolution in American historiography, if not in American politics and culture. The historiographical revolution consists of the increasing documentation and verification of many of the claims made in the 1940's and 50's by the most outspoken American anticommunists—Whittaker Chambers, Elizabeth Bentley, Louis Budenz, the investigators of the House Un-American Activities Committee, and Sen. Joseph McCarthy, to name only a few—that the U.S. government and other major American institutions had been deeply penetrated by

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communists and Soviet agents and that this penetration shaped American foreign policy significantly in the interests of communism in Russia, Europe, and Asia. Today, there is no doubt that these claims were true, though those who advanced them were vilified and often ruined during their lifetimes for making them and have been damned as liars, frauds, or psychotics ever since.

The political and cultural revolution that may follow the historiographical one ought to consist of the discrediting of those political figures and cultural leaders who mounted the crusade of vilification and damnation, who sneeringly ignored anticommunist warnings and evidence, scorned those who voiced them, and consistently denied that internal communist activities posed any danger to national security. Since those who

led the crusade were and are part of the dominant elites that have acquired power in the United States since the New Deal-Depression-World War II era, the discrediting of their anti-anticommunism ought to go far toward discrediting their claims to national leadership in general. Their stupidity, greed for power, ideological blindness, partisan obsessions, social snobbery, smug self-delusion, and sheer indifference enabled traitors in government to flourish and to help push Eastern Europe and China into communism, deliver nuclear weapons to Stalinist Russia, and allow the Cold War itself to take place. Enough of the grotesque truth about their blunders has already emerged to destroy forever their reputations as competent political actors, let alone as the heroes and geniuses they are purported to be, and to remove their political and cultural heirs from any access to power in the future.

We know the truth—at least part of it—about the reality of communist treason in the United States through two main sources (disregarding what the anti-communists tried to tell us 40 years ago). In the first place, the fall of the Soviet Union led to the partial opening of the archives of the KGB, the Soviet secret police and foreign intelligence service; much of what we know about Soviet espionage and those who collaborated with it comes from its files. Secondly, after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. government began releasing the details of what

it had learned from Soviet secret communications. These materials, known by their American code name of "Venona," also reveal much of what the Soviets and their American collaborators were doing on a clandestine and illegal level throughout the Cold War, from the 1940's onward.

But the book by British historian Christopher Andrew and his Russian coauthor Vasili Mitrokhin is based on yet a third source, unauthorized by the Soviets and unknown to American intelligence. Mr. Mitrokhin, who worked for the KGB as an archivist until his retirement in 1984, for 12 years without the knowledge of his supervisors squirreled away six cases of secret documents dating back to the Russian Revolution in 1918. *The Sword and the Shield* is based on those documents, or at least on part of them. Yet even with their disclosure, a vast amount of information remains hidden. As revolutionary as the implications of the available documents are, future revelations may turn out to be even more so.

The burden of the Andrew-Mitrokhin book is to substantiate many of the most nightmarish theories of the anti-communist right during the Cold War. It is now proved that the U.S. Communist Party was financially controlled by the Soviets, who routinely used it for espionage purposes; that the Soviet Union and its leadership were motivated by communist ideology (as well as other fixations); and that the Soviets regarded the United States as their "main enemy" (though Mr. Andrew, a man of leftish sentiments, insists on using the phrase "main adversary"). "The NKVD succeeded none the less in penetrating all the most sensitive sections of the Roosevelt administration," he writes. By April 1941, agents in the NKVD network in the United States numbered 221; Professor Herman, in his biography of Joe McCarthy, reports an estimate of 350 secret Soviet agents working in this country at the end of World War II. Among the major Soviet spies confirmed in the Andrew-Mitrokhin book are (in addition to the Rosenberg spy ring and those who penetrated Los Alamos) Lauchlin Currie, a top administrative assistant to President Franklin Roosevelt who had a particular influence on Asia policy and helped push China into communism; Treasury official Harry Dexter White, who dropped dead of a heart attack short-

ly after being named by Chambers; Duncan Chaplin Lee, personal assistant to William O. Donovan, head of the Office of Strategic Services; and Laurence Duggan, head of the Latin American division at the State Department.

Henry Wallace, vice-president during Roosevelt's third term (1941 to 45), said later that if the ailing Roosevelt had died during that period and he had become president, it had been his intention to make Duggan his Secretary of State and White his Secretary of the Treasury.

Hiss, too, would have stood an excellent chance of becoming secretary of state had he not been exposed.

Andrew is more than charitable to yet another major Roosevelt advisor who was almost certainly a conscious Soviet agent—Harry Hopkins. Andrew claims that Hopkins was "an American patriot with little sympathy for the Soviet system," but he also acknowledges that the secrets Hopkins gave to the Soviets, including the chief of their illegal network, Iskhak Akhmerov, were so impressive that "some KGB officers boasted that he had been a Soviet agent." In fact, Akhmerov later boasted that Hopkins was by far the most important spy the KGB controlled during World War II.

Much of this information was known before, at least to those who had the ears and brains to pay attention; the Mitrokhin documents merely confirm it once and for all. But they also confirm the reality of Soviet support for terrorism in the 1970's and 80's (despite the snortings of Western liberals that conservatives who pointed to it were merely mouthing Reaganite propaganda) as well as the success of Soviet disinformation in repeatedly befuddling the liberal mind. Among the lies that Soviet propaganda injected into the Western media and the heads of those dim enough to believe them was that J. Edgar Hoover was a homosexual; that the American right wing and the CIA were behind the assassination of President Kennedy (the KGB forged a note that Lee Harvey Oswald had supposedly written to right-wing oil magnate H.L. Hunt; the *New York Times* later claimed the note had been authenticated by three handwriting experts, and it regularly pops up in Kennedy assassination conspiracy books), and that AIDS was an invention of the CIA.

Andrew also discusses how the Soviets became disenchanted with Martin Luther King, Jr., and disseminated disinformation about him to African and American Negro news media, though he seems to underestimate the amount of influence that domestic communists exerted on King. Andrew is aware of the role communist Stanley Levison played in advising and writing for King, but discounts Communist Party claims that its agents would be able to direct King's policies. He also discounts Gus Hall's claims to Moscow that Andrew Young "himself did not know that several of his close friends in Atlanta were covert Communists, and he listened to them" while Young was ambassador to the United Nations under President Carter. (Hall reported as well that Young's view of the Soviet Union was basically "negative.") As for King, the Soviets came to seek his replacement by more militant leaders such as Stokely Carmichael and then disseminated disinformation that King had been murdered by the U.S. government in collusion with "white racists."

Andrew has little to tell about the so-called "McCarthy period," except to claim at least twice that, at the time when McCarthy was talking about the influence of communists in government, "Soviet penetration of the American government was at its lowest ebb for almost thirty years" and that "McCarthy ultimately did more for the Soviet cause than any agent of influence the KGB ever had." The latter statement, if not also the former, is especially preposterous in light of Prof. Arthur Herman's brilliant and readable reinterpretation of the Wisconsin senator's career and achievement.

Whereas the Andrew-Mitrokhin book, for all its devastating documentation of treason in the United States, Great Britain, and other Western governments, is ponderously written and almost pedantically detailed, Mr. Herman's biography is neither. Less of an authoritative, archivally based study than, as its subtitle tells us, a "reexamination" of McCarthy, it does not replace the heavier academic lifting of Thomas Reeves' 1982 biography. But the main difference between the two books is that, while Reeves finds the existence of a communist underground almost unbelievable and certainly unimportant, Mr. Herman is well-versed in its history and activities. Taking advantage of recent scholarship on Soviet-communist espionage activities disclosed by Soviet archives and the Venona

transcripts, Mr. Herman leaves little doubt that McCarthy was substantially correct in most of his claims about the damage done by either communist infiltration or fellow travelers, naive or not. "No hard evidence exists," he writes,

linking any of the China hands to actual Soviet espionage efforts: their White House liaison Lauthlin Currie and intellectual mentor Owen Lattimore are a different matter. But they were sold a bill of goods on the Maoist cause a little too easily. . . . And they spread a profoundly distorted view of what a Communist victory might mean.

He also acknowledges that McCarthy's frequent lack of caution and his willingness to exaggerate, bluster, and bluff invited hatred and fear of him, exposed him to his enemies, and left him vulnerable to the counterattacks that eventually destroyed him and his reputation. Professor Herman conceals nothing of the less attractive side of Joe McCarthy, but his book often tends to become almost a polemic in showing how McCarthy's own foes at the time, and liberals both then and since, have engaged in the same or even worse practices. The result of Professor Herman's approach to McCarthy is a radical reassessment of the figure whom he calls "the single most despised man in American political memory."

What is perhaps most significant about Professor Herman's reinterpretation, and by extension about all the recent books that substantiate the anticommunist case, is not so much what they tell us about the Soviet Union, communism in general, or even American communists in particular, as what they confirm about liberalism. Joe McCarthy was not hated by American liberals because he exposed communists or even because he launched what they thought (or claimed to think) were false accusations of communism. He was hated precisely because he attacked liberalism itself, saw through it, and made its fraudulence clear to more Americans than ever before. He exposed liberalism not only by revealing liberals' willingness to ignore or minimize communist infiltration, to side with the targets of anticommunist accusations rather than with the anticommunists themselves, to protect those targets even when they knew they

were guilty (as Harry Truman knew that both Hiss and White were guilty), and to deny or even glamorize the brutalities of communist government and foreign policies, but by showing in a highly rhetorical and metaphorical way that, in Professor Herman's words, American liberals "were infected with the same materialistic, secularist virus" as communists: "hence the strange affinity between the Communist and the New Dealer; between the progressive and the totalitarian visions of the maximalist state." McCarthy, in other words, was suggesting that the "affinity" between liberalism and communism was not just an accident, owing to personalities and circumstances. It was inherent in the worldview that both ideologies shared.

What McCarthy was telling the American people in the early 1950's, and what the American people were beginning to listen to, was that the liberalism of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower, and "Alger (I mean Adlai)" Stevenson was really not so very far from the communism of Joseph Stalin and Mao Tse-tung; that their philosophical proximity was the real reason liberals found it so hard to tell the difference between themselves and communists like Hiss, White, and the rest of the gang and why they found it so hard to explain why the difference was important. Hubert Humphrey came close to grasping and disclosing this secret when he said that "McCarthy's real threat to American democracy [is] the fact that he has immobilized the liberal movement." Liberals "just don't talk about anything else any more."

But McCarthy immobilized liberalism in a deeper sense than merely pre-occupying its energies, in the same way that conservatives' obsession with Bill Clinton has immobilized them. McCarthy was the first on a mass political level to challenge its credentials to serve as the philosophical framework of American government and civilization. In part because liberalism had no effective reply to his challenge and in part because he expressed it in forms that could not easily be refuted, the only response liberalism could make to McCarthy was one of personal destruction and demonization.

This is why the cliché that Professor Andrew repeats—that McCarthy "discredited" anticommunism and "did more for the Soviet cause than any agent of influence the KGB ever had"—is so absurd. It was precisely *because* Mc-

Carthy was so effective that he had to be destroyed and salt poured over the ground on which he had walked; he was effective not only in the actually rather trivial sense of exposing internal communism (most of what he did in this respect was largely a kind of police work) but in the far more important one of debunking the dominant ideological orthodoxy of the American ruling class that allowed communism to prosper, because it was closely related to and often indistinguishable from communism. Professor Andrew himself acknowledges that the government repression of communism initiated during the "McCarthy period" "dealt the CPUSA a blow from which it never fully recovered." The legal, judicial, and administrative extirpation of the treason that liberalism had permitted to fester would not have been possible had Joe McCarthy not helped popularize a deep public animosity toward communism and its agents. Blaming McCarthy for discrediting anticommunism misses the point that it was the lies about (and the demonization of) McCarthy concocted by his liberal enemies—not McCarthy himself—that harmed anticommunism among those gullible enough to swallow the liberal propaganda about it.

The sheer irresponsibility of American liberalism toward communism in the era of Roosevelt and Truman is what really emerges from both Mr. Herman's biography and the Andrew-Mitrokhin history, and it is an irresponsibility that should itself serve to discredit both the ideology and those who mouthed it. Unfortunately, by the time of that era, liberalism had become the dominant political formula of a new elite that used it to justify its own dominance and the ever-increasing expansion of state power on which it relied; the same elite continues to make use of it for the same purposes today. McCarthy's enduring importance in American history is likely to lie not so much in his exposures of internal communism as in his challenge to the dominance of liberalism and the ruling class it served, and also his efforts at the mass political mobilization of the postwar middle class against the new elite and its ideology. The same challenge exists today, despite the continuing hegemony of liberalism and its neo-conservative allies; all the secret things that have now been revealed may yet help push it closer to the victory that Joe McCarthy and the other martyrs of American anticommunism were denied during their lifetimes.

Simple Pleasures

by Derek Turner

Peter Simple's Century
by Michael Wharton
London: Claridge Press;
168 pp., £12.95



From 1957 to 1990, Michael Wharton, under the pen name of "Peter Simple," was partly or solely responsible for writing the *Daily Telegraph's* famous "Way of the World" column. Now well into his 80's, he continues to write in the same paper under the name of Marryat's hero, though *Telegraph* readers are rationed to just one column every Friday. (The "Way of the World" still appears, but is now written by Auberon Waugh.)

Over the decades, "Peter Simple" has become synonymous with unfashionable opinions of all kinds. He has become an institution in his own right, one of the few permanent features in a newspaper which has undergone many changes in recent decades. During all of this turmoil, Wharton has kept alive a beacon of visceral, romantic, traditional Toryism very much at odds with the bloodless and vulgar liberalism espoused by Margaret Thatcher and her drones. His column has certainly been one of the major reasons why many of the paper's traditional readers stayed with it during its various transitions. From the white Rhodesians and the Serbs to Jörg Haider, Wharton has consistently spoken out on behalf of lost causes and demonized right-wingers (usually one and the same thing), using his vibrant imagination and his keen sense of the absurd to subvert the idiotic but powerful notions of the establishment. The fact that his column is often humorous and always witty goes a long way to explain why it was not quietly dropped as an anachronistic embarrassment during one of the paper's spasmodic attempts to "modernise."

Wharton's conceits are legion; some are even legendary. He has invented and maintained a whole rogue's gallery of leftist characters—all of them only too recognizable. There is Mrs. Dutt-Pauker, a rich communist from Hampstead,

who lives in a house called Marxmount, full of mementos from the "good old days" of "Uncle Joe" and Lavrenti Beria. There is Anglican cleric Dr. Spaceley-Trellis, the "go-ahead Bishop of Bevin-don," who expresses himself in fashionable post-Christian inanities. There is Dr. Heinz Kiosk, a sociologist and chief psychiatric advisor to the "Meringue, Eclair and Profiterole Authority," whose notional lectures always end with the shouted statement, "We are all guilty!" There is Pippa Banshee, the literary critic, with her didactic strictures against didacticism. Of course, Wharton has a great deal of raw material to draw on for these caricatures, but few could manipulate the material so proficiently, and few have such keen insight into the underlying trends. His fiendish inventiveness extends to at least two fictional colleges—Nerdley and Stretchford universities (whose faculties include distinguished Visiting Professors of Road Rage Studies, Fat Cat Studies, Non-Smoking Studies, and Alcopop Studies)—and an (as yet) silent British "ethnic minority": the long-repressed Aztec community, "estimates of whose numbers range from three to 45,000." Famously, he also invented the phrase "race relations industry," and came up with the idea of Rentacrowd, the "mammoth consortium which supplies howling mobs for all occasions," manufacturing semi-automatic demonstrators in their factory "on the North Circular Road." He may well have anticipated the next move of the "anti-racist" crusaders by speaking of the "prejudometer," the "handy little instrument" that, pointed at someone, reads off his level of racism in "prejudons, the internationally recognized scientific unit of racial prejudice." His jocular item about how the Campaign for Racial Equality might seek to vanquish racism in space (black holes and "brown dwarfs" are particularly at risk) predated the recent row about the naming of a U.S. satellite after Gunga Din.

As a slight counterbalance to his fundamentally unappealing, if extremely amusing, leftist caricatures, he has created several more attractive characters, like Lt. Gen. Sir Frederick "Tiger" Nidgett (Retd.) of the Royal Army Tailoring Corps (whose brusque manner of speaking is modeled on that of Montgomery); "Redshank" the naturalist; and the "grim-

visaged" Alderman Foodbotham of Bradford, who, with his iron watchchain and powerful voice, exemplifies a civic, Northern, and English confidence that has now all but vanished. He has also brought into ethereal being a journal called the *Feudal Times and Reactionary Herald*, whose sonorous editorializing (on South Africa's planned new constitution) has an immensely calming effect:

Citizenship, democracy, equality of race and sex, rights and freedoms—we cannot but aver that these well-worn terms, so familiar in the mouths of levellers and foaming radicals of every kind, carry little or no meaning when taken singly, and amount, when taken together, to nothing more than an horrific chimera . . . this whole phantasmagoria, in which so many false hopes have been invested, rests on the fatal principle of arithmetical democracy, universal suffrage, "one man one vote" or by whatever other term this obfuscatory principle may be described.

Another pleasing conceit is his occasional description of his column as a sort of actual nation, a metaphysical "space" where his perfect social order—of contented, ruddy-cheeked yeomen, Augustan prince archbishops, great nobles, and enthusiastic tribal levies, living in a mysterious and half-wild country almost without technology—can wax even as the outside world wanes.

Wharton has adopted several Ludites, localists, and patriots as columnar heroes, such as a marvelous Indian lady who has campaigned against a dam-building scheme in her home state; Wittgenstein; and Colonel Sibthroe, Tory MP for Lincoln for some 40 years until 1855, described fondly by Wharton as "a man after my own heart, a landowner of the old school, xenophobe, enemy of any and every kind of change from railways to public libraries, and to his contemporaries a comic figure who was continually lampooned in *Punch* and laughed at whenever he spoke in the Commons, which was often and at great length." Elsewhere, Wharton has described his views as being those of a "Tory anarchist" and a "universal nationalist," whose principal complaint against

militant nationalists is that they are not militant enough in protecting their identities against the onslaught of technology.

Wharton was born Michael Nathan in Bradford in 1913, of part-Jewish origin, a fact of which he has always been aware and which long made him actually uncomfortable. He assumed his mother's maiden name of Wharton in 1937 in order to distance himself from both this disliked dual ancestry and the "oddity and even absurdity" of his early life. A shy but clever child, he went to Bradford Grammar School, where he took an early interest in poetry. He went on to Oxford but was sent down for smashing crockery and throwing a Scotch egg at the high table in hall. He began writing fantastical pieces for *Punch* and other magazines. When war came, he joined up and, much to his own surprise, ended as a lieutenant colonel. After the war, he found odd, unsatisfying writing jobs and worked for the BBC until, on New Year's Day 1957, "with one of the most appalling hangovers I have ever had in my life," he sat down for the first time at his desk in the *Daily Telegraph's* offices in Fleet Street. The richly marked characters he met while at the paper have fueled his imagination ever since. The second volume of his autobiography, *The Dubious Codicil* (volume one is called *The Missing Will*, a reference both to Wharton's mother's belief that she was somehow the rightful owner of the estates of the landed Yorkshire Whartons and, more subtly, to Wharton's perceived lack of self-confidence) is full of hilarious anecdotes of heroic Fleet Street tapsters. The current collection of his pieces, covering 1987 to the present, is the latest of 13 such anthologies. They are uncategorized and undated, but appear in roughly chronological order. The columnar ingredients have been well chosen to reflect all of Wharton's diverse preoccupations over a depressing era in British life, during which the Conservatives failed to conserve, the leftists forgot their working-class decency, and everyone forgot about England in their anxiety to consume.

Naturally, Wharton has also picked up a few enemies: In *The Dubious Codicil*, he recounts his delight at seeing a leftist demonstration passing the *Telegraph* offices under banners denouncing "The fascist Peter Simple." His autobiographical candor, in which he mentions unashamedly his contemporary support for Franco and his belief that "to have been a German tank commander, on that first

morning [of Barbarossa], waiting on the fragrant turf, with the larks singing, for the order to advance into the blue distances of Russia, would have been to experience true military glory, perhaps for the last time in the history of the world," will not help dispel that superficial impression. But to the more thoughtful and romantic—his admirers include Auberon Waugh, Kingsley Amis, A.N. Wilson, Anthony Howard, and Roger Scruton—and at least some others with sound instincts (like those who flooded London for the recent "Countryside Marches"), Wharton is no longer a mere columnist. For all his essential modesty and the origins he decries (or, perhaps, because of them), he has become an *ipso facto* tribal elder. Even in his seemingly ephemeral medium, thanks to editors like those who painstakingly produce these delightful miscellanies, Wharton has attained to an ink-stained glory of his own. Rather like the original Peter Simple (or von Grimmelshausen's Simplicissimus), Wharton is "no longer the fool, but the head of the family."

Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, published in London.

The Confederate Pimpnel

by J.O. Tate

Gray Ghost:
The Life of Col. John Singleton Mosby
by James A. Ramage
Lexington: University Press of Kentucky;
428 pp., \$30.00



Fame, even mere celebrity, creates a reality of its own. We are often curious about the reality behind the image, and if sometimes we are disappointed, we have to admit also that sometimes we are not. The story that Professor Ramage tells with authority cannot be thought of as disappointing in any way. In that sense, what's old is new, and what has been presumed to be predictable is in fact surprising, and then some.

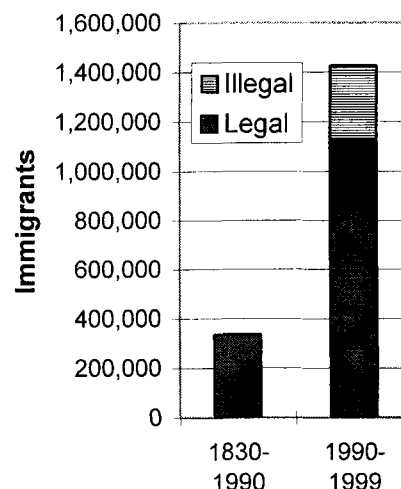
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tained to such fame. Mosby was constantly referred to in the Union as well as the Confederate newspapers—he was a bogeyman to the North and a hero to the South, even though he never commanded more than 400 men. The reach of Mosby's renown is hard to estimate, but I can think of three ways to approach it. He was the only Confederate to be treated as he was by a contemporary major author in Melville's poem, *The Scout towards Aldie*. That work, which first appeared in *Battle Pieces* (1866), uses Mosby's name in every one of its stanzas, as the mysterious enemy comes to dominate that poem by dominating the imaginations of the invading Yankee soldiers he successfully opposes. Ramage has shown that psychological domination was one of Mosby's most powerful weapons; and Edmund Wilson, Aaron

Kramer, and Stanton Garner have variously dealt with the qualities of Melville's poem.

A second aspect of fame, one more familiar to us than literary citation, is cinematic celebration. At least two former Confederate generals wore blue in 1898, but only Mosby (1833-1916) played himself in a movie. It's too bad there are no known copies of *All's Fair in Love and War* (1910), in which the 76-year-old appeared as his self of 1861, but we will have to do without. In 1913, there was another movie, *The Pride of the South*, with Joseph King playing Mosby.

The Gray Ghost, starring Tod Andrews as "Major John Mosby," was syndicated by CBS in 1957-8, and only Boston objected that "portraying a rebel as a hero" was subversive. At that time, there was a *Gray Ghost* comic book as well. There was even a Walt Disney show about Mosby in 1967. Today, John Singleton Mosby is easily accessed as a commodity or collectible—so much for fame. In his *Memoirs*, Mosby himself ruefully told the tale of what fame was worth:

One night I was with one man near the enemy's camps in Fairfax. We were passing a house, when I heard a dog bark and somebody call, "Come here, Mosby." So I turned, rode up to the house, and asked the man if he had called me.

"No," he said, "I was calling Mosby. I wanted him to stop barking."

The core of Mosby's reputation is, of course, in his military career, which was in the cavalry. There is no doubt that Mosby was Stuart's and Lee's favorite and most trusted scout, and in various episodes, Mosby did influence events by the information that he had gathered. But it was the leadership of his group of partisan rangers that did the most to bring him renown. In that part of northern Virginia he caused to be called "Mosby's Confederacy" and elsewhere, capturing a Yankee general in bed, masquerading as the enemy, fighting Custer, bedeviling Sheridan, raiding in the dark, sending Lincoln a lock of his hair, escaping wounded and returning as bushy-tailed as ever, Mosby earned his fame by defying the Yankees and fooling them again and again. When the end came, Mosby was disappointed. Just over the river from Washington, he and his men were doing nicely and had no inkling of Lee's sur-

render or its necessity. Ramage has done fine work in clarifying the tangled story of Mosby's many fights, the complicated contexts of Yankee plans, and in assessing and refusing to overestimate Mosby's contribution to the Confederate war effort: For this alone, his book is well worth reading and having.

But the story is bigger than that. Mosby was in conflict before the war and after it. He shot a bully and was expelled from the University of Virginia, and started reading law while he was in jail. During the war, he sent to his wife for books of poetry, novels, and history, many allusions to which show up in his *Memoirs*. After the war, he became a Republican and a friend of Grant, a position that did not play in Virginia at that time, but has since. Appointed by Hayes as consul to Hong Kong, Mosby was the reformer of a corrupt civil service, and received a remarkable compliment before he left that post. General Li Hung Chang, who had prevailed over the great Tai Rebellion, actually invited Mosby in 1884 to recruit Confederate veterans to fight for China against France in the Sino-French War in "Annam," today's Vietnam. But surely this is an aperture into alternative history that we can pass by, as Mosby did.

The point is that Mosby had a flair for contrarian and surprising action. Ramage attributes this quality to his small stature and hatred of bullies. Mosby loved to fight and was good at it, in the field and in the courtroom and on the hustings, too. His wit and his temperament sent him colliding with others in the Sand Hills of Nebraska as well as in the clouds of the national mythology.

Mosby's alliance with the Republicans—a refusal of political correctness in the Virginia of his time—is allied to other such refusals. Though he was faithful to the Confederate cause, he was not intellectually bound by it after it was gone. He said what he wanted to about slavery and secession, appreciating the ambiguity of politics in peace just as he had pushed the envelope of the acceptable in war. Since we now have more need of accurately remembering John Singleton Mosby in his high-spirited singularity than ever before, James A. Ramage's comprehensive and convincing study could not be more timely or more welcome.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.



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Letter From Florida

by Joe Prussing

Driving Dixie Down



Did I make a wrong turn? Did I go too far north? No, I was still in beautiful Fort Pierce, Florida. What shocked me into thinking I had accidentally wound up in South Carolina was a flag: two red bars diagonally crossing a solid white background, suspiciously resembling the dreaded Confederate Cross. There it was, flying defiantly in the dawn's early light, high over the St. Lucie County Civic Center, on Martin Luther King Boulevard, no less! The shame of the South, African-America's worst nightmare, the Klan's sacred shroud, the cracker banner: the Florida state flag. Go look for yourselves.

Naturally, it had to be disguised, slightly altered, and inconspicuously cloaked, so as not to attract reprisal from those who believe the Civil War was actually fought over slavery, and that the South started it. Gone are the stars, along with states' rights. But the colors are the same as those that flew over the cotton fields of Alabama, just as they flew from the masts of New England slave ships a hundred years before. Both are tainted, but only one is despised. It's a conspiracy! The cross must be clandestinely displayed in light of the Confederate flag controversy still burning in other slave states, like Arkansas and Tennessee (where those good ol' boys Bill and Al are from), where they still proudly display the battle flag from the statehouse domes, albeit camouflaged in similar fashion: Jim Crow . . . in drag. I just had to look away.

Humming a few bars of "Yankee Doodle Dandy," I drove north (where else?) until I came to Fort Pierce City Hall. Glancing up at the towering ark, I noticed, much to my chagrin, the same inscrutable symbol of heritage and hate waving in the balmy breeze. Where are Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton when you need them? Probably out collecting more tax-free donations from the other slaves of the Democratic Party, or pro-

tecting gang-bangers in the 'hood.

Seeking the justice I so feverishly craved, I headed straight for the county courthouse. But I should have known better. There they were again! Those hideous bars, red and white; the same Southern-fried swastika I'd observed previously, challenging the courts as well as the heavens. Apparently, the Old South wasn't about to let this blond-haired, blue-eyed, transplanted Yankee taste the victory of Appomattox. Lee's sword would not be surrendered. Not yet. Not here in Fort Pierce, anyway. Maybe Lynyrd Skynyrd was right, after all, and Southern man really don't need me 'round . . . anyhow, I moved on.

Circling the newly constructed roundabout, I turned in toward the power plant to be with my brother victims of Southern hostility, and man's inhumanity to mammals, at the Manatee Observation Center. Perhaps the propeller-scarred torsos of the gentle sea cows would somehow remind me of Neil Young's real Southern man. But there, I was accosted once again by the same offensive sight: the Southern Cross. But it gets even worse, folks. This time that rebel rag was flying *above* Old Glory herself. I was crushed.

Feeling downright suicidal, I made my way to the Indian River lagoon to drown my Yankee pride and join brothers Abraham, Martin, and John in Integrated Paradise—to be free at last of those baneful bars. I would not be so lucky. Perhaps I just ain't ready for heaven, or whatever it is they call that place where all flags are the same color, or they have none at all. For there on the same banks where Johnny Reb probably fished as a boy stood the new Fort Pierce Library. Finally! A place where oppression is found only in dusty history books, or other great literary devices, even if they were written by a bunch of old dead white guys. Sanctuary at last.

And there, in front of that modern monument of truth, on a lonely pole flew my beloved Stars and Stripes, on Southern soil, in public domain, with none of the Dixie dressings attached: no culture; no heritage; no honor; no tradition; no reminder of the way things used to be; no sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves; and most of all—no bars! But suddenly she looked weak and trans-

parent, as if half her colors had been washed away by politically correct minds so pathologically obsessed with insulting no one that they offend everyone and eventually destroy everything worth living and dying for. She had changed somehow. She appeared dead in her own diversity.

Was this the same Star-Spangled Banner brother Francis wrote about? This flag which we now see flying in gay-pride parades; at feminized military installations all over the world; tattooed on the emasculated bodies of World Wrestling Federation hybrids grazing on steroids (let's pray they don't hang around as long as their paleo cousins, who at least had enough testosterone in their groins to grow hair on their knuckles); and pledged to by ghetto thugs in public school who think Jefferson Davis is the latest BET rap artist, and *y'all* is a new ebonics buzzword? This banner, which is made in China, soaked in Serbian blood, and sold to the highest bidder every four years in Washington, D.C.? This flag, which condemns the peddling of human flesh while condoning its destruction moments before birth? I think not. Something was missing. This was not the banner that draped the bodies at Gettysburg.

It was a melancholy moment, which made me think more of those old soldiers of the South, the same ones my own ancestors may have fought against. It wasn't really about slaves—Mr. Lincoln himself acknowledged that much. And who's to say Southern man would not have eventually acquiesced to his better senses and freed his slaves on his own? (Unlike some Northern proponents of the war, and some of our own Founding Fathers.) It was about the right to separate, constitutionally—and peacefully, if possible—which disqualifies it from being a Civil War in the first place. But I couldn't stop thinking about the flag, the colors; and I especially couldn't stop thinking about the bars. So, finding the nearest one, I ordered me a mint julep, whistled a few bars of "Dixie," and drank a toast to dear old Jeb Stuart . . . in the twilight's last gleaming.

Joe Prussing writes from Fort Pierce, Florida.

Letter From Barsoom

by Brian Kirkpatrick

Learning to Speak in Opar



When I was ten, I fell into the novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. With him, I fled the dinosaurs of Pellucidar in the center of the earth; in the company of the anthropoid apes, I sought the fabled jewels of Opar. I wondered at the hurtling moons of Barsoom, and gasped for oxygen in the thin air of that dying world. When a storm blew my hovercraft off course in the east Atlantic, I crashed in an England dragged down into barbarism by a savage Great War that had dragged on for decades. One summer day, in a brief break from the books, my brother and I even laid out a board and improvised pieces so we could play the Martian game of chess the author had so lovingly described.

A Burroughs hero usually had to learn a new language, and quickly, simply to survive. A lovely girl who could only be wooed in her own tongue often gave a special urgency to the task. This crucial process followed a simple pattern: The hero pointed to objects, gave the English word, then heard the foreign word in reply. In the novels, this occupied a page or two at most: no fuss with case or gender, no grappling with irregular verbs. Only someone who has struggled to learn a new language as an adult can give this fantasy the bitter smile it deserves.

Burroughs' books were written for boys, but in them he revealed a great, dark truth of life: We all spend much of our lives among people who don't quite speak our language. Twenty years out of Texas, my accent still claims me every late night. For five years after college, I had to fight not to use a slang that only the residents of a particular dormitory, from a particular time, would have understood. When my son, heir to my bad habits, came home from three weeks of an academic camp, his conversation was drenched with the idiosyncratic phrases of another group of boys.

When I teased an Argentine friend about the rhythm and pronunciation of her Spanish, the conversation hurled me into an isolated, exotic world that re-

mined me of Burroughs. As we ate ice cream in a mall, she described a Buenos Aires that was as mysterious and fantastic as distant Barsoom. She told stories of hyperinflation, and the catastrophic return of Juan Perón; of ice cream eaten on hot summer nights at Christmastime; and bits of gossip about her country's dictator, invited to her wedding. She hadn't known the *desaparecidos*, the vanished victims of Argentina's "dirty war" honored by the outside world; she had been raised among the people who had made them disappear. She thought of the soldiers responsible for the disappearances as fathers and husbands, and explained that some of their children were the orphans of the *desaparecidos*.

In the United States, we often speak of Latin America as if it were inhabited by a single, cohesive people, but history and geography make other groupings, limited as those may also be, more reasonable. Music, style, and celebrities usually pass easily among the countries that once constituted the nation of Gran Colombia: Venezuela, the diminished Colombia, and the others in the northwest corner of South America. But the Argentines mix poorly with the Gran Colombians, and the short, stocky Central Americans remain isolated from the rest. Dominicans or Puerto Ricans may revere a singer from Colombia's Cali, but the Gran Colombians look down on the *ranchero* music and cowboy hats, boots, and silver belt buckles of northern Mexico.

Argentina and Uruguay, in turn, are nearly a separate subcontinent. Formidable barriers isolate Argentina and Uruguay: to the east and south, the ocean; to the north, the Brazilians, speaking not Spanish but Portuguese, and Paraguay, yet another special case; to the west, the highest mountains in the New World. Most of the Argentines and their neighbors on the Rio de la Plata are not *mestizos*—descendants of the Indians and Spanish—as are so many of the Gran Colombians. Rather, they are descendants of Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and Englishmen. In Argentina, an Italian surname is more common than one from Spain. My friend Fernando, a native of Mendoza at the base of the Andes, loves soccer, but the English game of rugby is his favorite sport, and pictures of him in a bloody high-school jersey reflect the depth of his passion. The Argentines' emotional distance from their neighbors is reflected in jokes: "Why do Chileans

love the tango? Because at the end of every tango, an Argentine dies." "When is an Argentine being unfaithful? When he quits looking in the mirror."

A Burroughs hero from Colombia, finding himself in Argentina, might want to start pointing and saying the names of things, hoping someone would teach him the proper word. In their homes or on the radio, my Argentine friends heard a Spanish unique to their country, not the language we Americans learn in school. To me, their Spanish has the inflections and rhythms of Italian, not those of the Spanish spoken in Spain, or even in Gran Colombia. My friend Cristina had to be taught the niceties of international Spanish; when she reminisced with another native of Buenos Aires, the two women rolled their eyes and groaned about classes in "Castilian." The present perfect, a comfortable, familiar construction for the Gran Colombians as well as speakers of English, exists in the far south in books but is rarely used. The Argentines even have a pronoun no other country uses: the informal *you* is rendered *vos*, not *tu* as in the rest of the Hispanic world; and *vos* has a conjugation only the people of the southern countries know. Once my friend spoke to her little girl using *vos*, then turned to me, paused, refocused, and spoke to me using *tu*. I could all but hear the shift of gears: I speak Colombian Spanish, not Argentine.

Buenos Aires, with its many millions and its history of tension with the countryside, even has its own dialect, *lunfardo*, with verbs unknown outside of the *pampas* nations, and playful variants of Spanish nouns. In Buenos Aires one may be best served by requesting *feca*, a reversal of the syllables of the Spanish *café*, when ordering coffee. (In Buenos Aires, I think that I might point, say "steak" in Spanish, and hope for the best.) In recent years, *lunfardo* has spread throughout much of the country.

A grammarian might consider the Spanish of Argentina a sign of laziness, but it is other things as well. In the far south, a new language threatens to enter the world, just as Spanish and Portuguese, neighboring languages with no Andes to climb, once separated centuries ago. In the recent past, we have seen fiercely guarded borders melt, then be redrawn; the Northern Italian struggles to understand a Sicilian: Why not a new language for a distinctive people?

We heirs to the language of Milton

and Chaucer find ourselves in the grip of the same process. I can read the novels of Chinua Achebe in the original, but the spoken English of West Africa or even Jamaica is at times nearly incomprehensible to me. Recently, I told my son, "ICQ is a cross between AOL's instant message and a chat room, but you can use any ISP to log on." Ten years ago, that sentence would have been nonsense. My son simply nodded.

Language joins, but language separates. When people form a cohesive group, their very union separates them from their neighbors. The Argentines, linguistic penguins riding on an iceberg that has calved from the mainland, have begun to drift away from the Gran Colombians. If the process continues, the people of the pampas will not be able to read the works of any future Gabriel García Márquez of Colombia except in translation.

We can think of this process as entropy, the inevitable falling apart of any human thing, or another of the countless meanings of Original Sin, but the slow ubiquitous metamorphosis of human speech reflects the vocabulary of the heart. Linguistic species emerge, evolve, and disappear. What Burroughs did not tell me is that the isolation people suffer because of the existence of multiple languages is their own doing. Passed through the minds and tongues of many, a language is shaped like a rock in a river. No conscious choice is involved; how we speak and the things we want to say grow naturally out of living in the midst of our own people. A people's mores, institutions, and language grow organically, and short of outright conquest, no outsider with a desire for order or for being "reasonable" can dictate these things.

In Argentina, there has been a serious outbreak of human nature. The Argentines are occupied with living their lives, and in so doing slowly distance themselves from the other half-billion of the earth who speak Spanish. They cannot help it, and mean no harm. It is just that, for my friend, there is no dance like the tango, no accent that sounds quite right that does not come from Buenos Aires—and, truth be told, just her part of Buenos Aires. She feels these things intensely, just as any resident of distant Opar would tell you, with passion, that there are no jewels to rival those from home.

Brian Kirkpatrick is a physician who lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

Letter From Venice

by Andrei Navrozov

Acqua Alta



Last year, when I first came to live here—as bearer of the *Carta Venezia*, the photo ID which entitles the city resident to buy water-bus tickets at 75 cents instead of the tourist's three dollars, I have every right to say "live" rather than "visit"—I made a private pact with Neptune and the spirits of the lagoon. That's how we Russians are: Just give us a nice little pact and some secret protocols, and you can keep your money, your girls, and your red Ferrari.

Leaving out some of the duller codicils, I can disclose that my principal obligation under the terms of the pact was never to throw a cigarette butt into the water. I never smoke less than a pack a day, and was perfectly used to flicking the yellow-filtered butts with a James Dean sort of moodiness onto the pavements of many a world capital, but here a manifest change comes over the most repulsive of God's creatures. Even the most recalcitrant provincial egotist in the millipede mass of sightseeing brutes, who, when in Rome, would not think twice before scattering Hershey's wrappers on the floor of the Pantheon, may well hesitate before throwing his stupid rubbish into the hyaline stillness of a Venetian canal.

The vow was made to the Adriatic and the lagoon, rather than to the city, because I always knew that one day I would have to get myself a boat of my own, which is what I've recently done. However easy and peaceful it is to putter at five miles an hour through the canals of Venice, once you are out in the lagoon, where changing currents, submerged sandbanks, and treacherous fog are considered a serious challenge to experienced islanders, you are in the power of Neptune, who will at least soak you to the marrow of your bones by way of admonition, if not actually skewer you with his trident like a piece of vinegar-dressed *musetto* that, of a misty cold morning, goes so well with a glass of Treviso cabernet. Neptune must be appeased, I reasoned, and at the risk of looking perfectly ridiculous I took to stuffing cigarette butts

into my coat pockets, to throw them away later. I used to dump them in little heaps, like carnival confetti, right on the ground, on the indifferent, impersonal, unfeeling ground.

Now to change the tack for a moment. I had dinner the other night with Edward Goldsmith, founder of *The Ecologist* magazine and brother of the late Sir James Goldsmith, the man who died trying to save British sovereignty from the encroachment of a Europe where, to paraphrase an old prophecy in a way that is relevant to my personal concerns, the writers would be Dutch, the tax inspectors Albanian, and the vintners Finnish. We talked about wine, as it happens, which very few growers nowadays do not muck up with pesticides and stabilizers, about Alain de Benoist, about free-range chickens and organically raised vegetables, about liberty, about Monsanto, about Margaret Thatcher. But the spectral question, one whose invisible, clammy, embarrassing presence I felt all through dinner, was this: Are we spoiled? Are we just a couple of spoiled brats, sitting on this dining-room banquette at Aspinalls and bitching, like Marie Antoinette with Maria Theresa, about the world outside and whether gingerbread cake ought to be banned because it ruins digestion?

I do not think so. I think there exists an objectively demonstrable connection between human happiness and the integrity of life. This last, like the political sovereignty which Sir James fought to defend, is a quality—such as that of a chain possessed of certain tensile strength—rather than a quantity, measurable in chicken-in-the-pot and DVD-in-the-bedroom units. It is, furthermore, a connection that can be shown to exist at all economic levels, from—I nearly wrote "the humble gondolier" before realizing that this would rather impair my reputation as an astute social observer—from myself, the only genuinely poor man of my acquaintance, to my millionaire interlocutor, Teddy Goldsmith.

You cannot be a bit of a fallen woman, or something of a virgin. Once the chain is broken, it doesn't matter what bribes the electorate has received in the process, and how many chickens there are now in every pot. For theirs are not chickens, but reusable plastic effigies; theirs is not liberty, but an ever-thinning mess of latitudes; theirs is not life, but a general-issue simulacrum. I am not an environmentalist, or I would make the point by de-

scribing the degradation of the chain link by link, from plankton to fisherman to poet. Nor am I a political scientist, who could make the point by mapping the erosion of the rights of the individual in the present epoch of transnational government and multinational corporate interests. I am just a 20-a-day smoker who vowed to Neptune he would not litter in the lagoon, and I'm making the integralist point as best I can.

One sunny day there came *acqua alta*, for the first time that year and my very first in Venice. It is easy to describe what this is like to another Russian, because it's exactly like the first snowfall, when the known landscape of yesterday is converted overnight into the surgical cotton warehouse of a Martian field hospital, while the banal, leafless tree branch outside your window that had been looking almost utilitarian since September suddenly takes on the irrational contours of a beautiful and profligate thought. The children are out in the street, horsing around in the newsworthiness of it all, knee-deep, as if, literally, there was no tomorrow, while the parents are uncharacteristically indulgent, as if their own childhood, along with everything that's ever gone right in their lives, has been restored to them in that blessed instant.

To a person who knows nothing and wants to know nothing of the transport of the elements, somebody who would insist that a more urbane and forthright description be supplied to him, I can say that *acqua alta* works exactly like the bathtubs of Claridge's, that great flagship of pre-war, afternoon-tea-perfect hydro-pneumatic engineering in London, whose porcelain vastness the water fills through the plugholes from below, rather than the taps from above, with the expensive consequence that, after the initial gurgle of welcome, it is utterly noiseless. Here in Venice the streets, which are rarely wider than a Claridge's bathtub, fill up through small plughole-shaped grates cut into paving stone with just the same plush noiselessness and the same efficient quickness born of the eagerness to please, to provide Old World value for money, to compete with the Hilton and win. The water rises, changing the aspect of the city and providing the resident with the excuse to buy special rubber boots that anyone but a sexual deviant would agree look like medieval armor, stays a few hours, and eventually recedes, leaving the cobblestones clean as a shop window and the occasional ground-floor

shopkeeper cursing the day he turned down the offer to move to Mestre.

And my cigarette butts? They got washed away and ended up somewhere out in the lagoon, in an unwitting yet direct violation of my pact with Neptune. The ground of Venice and the islands, it turned out, is not as indifferent and impersonal as I and all the other transient *foresti* might have supposed, but is the solid shell of the liquid sea and part of its mystery. So, too, with the chain of well-being, whose healthiest sections—the ones least likely to snap right in front of me, the ones most certain to last me until absolute disillusionment settles in—I devote myself to seeking out and recording. Only rarely does the chain show itself to be stronger than one has assumed, and as ever it is only nature that is capable of pleasant surprises and of teaching the cynical pupil a cynical lesson.

Andrei Navrozov is *Chronicles'* European correspondent.

Letter From England

by Derek Turner

New Gaybour



In 1988, the Conservative government passed the Local Government Act. The most controversial part of the Act was Section 28. Subsection 1 stated:

A local authority should not (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality or (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

Subsection 2 was slightly more conciliatory in tone, saying that "Nothing in Subsection 1 shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease."

Section 28 was the culmination of a long campaign carried out by pro-family campaigners who had become increasingly concerned about the promotion of homosexuality in schools; even very

young children were being exposed to didactic tracts like the infamous *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*. It was one of the best things the Conservatives did in an 18-year incumbency remembered now more for its missed opportunities than for its achievements. Predictably, there was outrage from the usual suspects, but even some moderate homosexuals supported Section 28; they at least could tell the difference between "not promoting" and savagely repressing homosexuality. But a pledge to repeal Section 28 appeared in Labour's 1997 general election manifesto; this clause alone shows how far Labour's governing elite has moved from the party's traditional supporters. Few asked how this fit in with Labour's oft-stated desire to bolster family life and Tony Blair's highly public visits to churches.

The issue ran through the whole election campaign. Labour fielded several openly homosexual candidates who were elected; some of them are presently ministers. Since the election, there have been more revelations of zoophyte affiliations in Labour ranks, most famously Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Mandelson and Ron Davies, then Welsh Secretary, who had a bizarre escapade while cruising for black boys on Clapham Common, during which he was robbed by a man whom he had followed into a council estate.

These individuals are amongst those agitating for the repeal of Section 28, saying that it leads to "homophobic" bullying in schools, although the government admits that it has only "anecdotal evidence" that this is a problem. (An interesting aside on the homosexual debate is how the customary roles of right and left are reversed, with leftists believing all of a sudden that homosexuals are born rather than made, while rightists believe that homosexuals are made rather than born.)

There are still enough traditionalist Labour or cross-bench peers—like Lord Longford, who thinks of "homosexuality" as "sinful, sinful, sinful"—for Millbank to be approaching the issue warily. There are also some heavyweight campaigners on the right side, such as Chris Woodhead, chief inspector of schools, and the redoubtable Tory Baroness Young, who arranged for a display in the House of Lords showing the kind of agitprop likely to be forced on children as young as six if Section 28 is repealed. Senior churchmen (like Scotland's Roman Catholic leader, Cardinal Winning),

rather surprisingly, came out in support of Section 28, as did the chief rabbi. Even more surprisingly, a millionaire Scottish businessman has put up money and promised to hold “poll tax-style” street demonstrations. The first result of these efforts was seen on February 7, when a packed House of Lords, which voted on the legislation before the Commons, threw the bill out by a substantial majority, 210 to 165. Even government vaporings about how Section 28 would be replaced with sex education which stressed the importance of marriage and family life did not convince many Labour peers.

This result is, however, only a reprieve, as the government has promised that “Section 28 will go,” and Labour’s enormous Commons majority will ensure its passage in the lower House whenever it is introduced there. Like all good “liberals,” Tony Blair will try again and again until he gets the “right” result. But if the peers stand firm when the legislation is introduced in the Lords next time, then the government may have to drop the clause or risk losing a whole legislative package. And then it may be too late to try again before the next election.

Even if Section 28 does get repealed,

Labour should be wary of electoral repercussions. Interviewed recently in the *Sunday Telegraph*, a typical Labour voter in Sedgefield, Blair’s constituency, has finally noticed that “If you’re white, working-class and heterosexual they don’t care about you.”

Derek Turner is the editor of Right NOW!, published in London.

Letter From Inner Israel

by Jacob Neusner

Rabbis, But No Torah



When the religion of Judaism speaks in its contemporary modulations—whether Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or integrationist-Orthodoxy—we should hear many voices. But instead we hear one: the voice of left-liberal politics.

With the exception of self-segregated Orthodoxy, most (though, happily, not all) rabbis preach a secular doctrine of left-wing orthodoxy. That is puzzling, because the Torah—Scripture (the “Old Testament”) and the Mishnah, Talmuds, and Midrash that record the oral revelation of Sinai—presents a remarkably conservative vision of the social order. “Judaism” favors gay rights—except in the Torah. “Judaism” favors “a woman’s right to choose,” even at the very end of term—except in the law of the Torah, which deems the fetus to have a soul at a specific point in the pregnancy. “Judaism” opposes the death penalty—except in the Torah. Compose a list of liberal shibboleths, and I will cite, chapter and verse, rabbinical sermons and the resolutions of their associations that identify them as “Judaism.” And that is not to mention secular Jews and their organizations.

What explains the gap between the teachings of the Torah and the position of its contemporary masters, the rabbinates of today? The failure of the rabbinical schools to set forth a coherent intellectual structure and system resting on Torah learning has produced a generation of rabbis with little or no Torah to

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teach. By “Torah,” I speak of a basic philosophy—a core theology—that guides the everyday encounter with the crises of life, both public and private, and that accords with the revelation by God to Moses at Mount Sinai. In general, rabbis do not refer back to a common body of learning that marks them as rabbis—not professors, not social workers, not community administrators, not ethnic cheerleaders, nor any of the myriad roles rabbis define for themselves by reason of the intellectual bankruptcy of the rabbinate.

The exceptions today, and they are not few, prove the rule. But in prior generations, one could look to Reform and Conservative rabbis as well as to synagogue-Orthodox rabbis for a distinctively rabbinical message. Prior generations made the effort, at least, to deliver a religious message, and if they took a political position, it was in dialogue with the Torah. Today, they do not even try. The American rabbinate once took for granted that a rabbi is someone who knows specific things and believes them. These specific things always included Scripture as mediated by the rabbis of the Mishnah, Talmuds, and Midrash compilations, as well as the body of received exegesis of Scripture produced by Rabbinic Judaism from antiquity to our own time. Rabbinic discourse reflected two things. The first was sheer knowledge of “the Tradition,” which was defined as Scripture and Talmud, broadly construed. The second was something harder to identify but just as palpable: a certain attitude of mind, a philosophy, a theology, formed in dialogue with Scripture and Talmud. Given the contents of the Torah, this attitude reflected conservative values.

Reconstructionist rabbis are an easy target, since their seminary includes in its faculty so few heavyweight scholars. And Reform rabbis, with their investment in Jewish ethnicity, political liberalism, Israelism, and holocaustism, as well as their frequent substitution of personality for intellectual perspicacity, scarcely care about Torah learning. If the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College sets the low-water mark for scholarly inconsequence, how many important books have come from the entire faculty of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, Cincinnati, New York City, and Jerusalem? The intellectually rigorous work of Eugene Borowitz does not stand entirely alone over the past ten years from that faculty, but it also does

not occupy a crowded platform.

How the JTSA has fallen! I studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America from 1954 through 1960, abandoning my Reform upbringing to get what I then conceived to be a better Jewish education in Conservative Judaism than I believed I could get in the Reform seminary. It was a difficult venture, but worth the anguish because of the galaxy of intellectual and scholarly superstars Louis Finkelstein had assembled. (He would replace them with mediocrities in the next generation, many of them JTSA alumni, who would find their way into the academy and out of Jewish-sponsored institutions entirely.) One need not reach the stratospheric level of an Abraham J. Heschel or a Mordecai Kaplan or a Shalom Spiegel to serve as an intellectual model for generations of young rabbis. Even second-rank players such as Saul Lieberman and Moshe Zucker and Judah Goldin and Chaim Zalman Dimitrovsky made an impact. Today’s JTSA faculty has no Heschel. I consulted the faculty listing on its website, and I was astonished by the low scholarly aspirations of most, though not all, of that mostly mediocre collection of never-wases-pretending-to-be-has-beens (a phrase someone once used of the Boston Hebrew College of a prior generation).

Ah, but what of Orthodox rabbis? Surely, they bring to the Jewish community a deep knowledge of the sources of Judaism? That intuitive judgment is both right and wrong. Yeshiva-Orthodoxy, segregated in its educational world, with its emphasis on Talmud study and on Torah learning, produces large numbers of young men who have encountered the Talmud and know this and that. When I meet such young men and ask them what they are studying, I am usually puzzled by their low educational ambitions. This is summed up by an admittedly extreme case. When I was lecturing in Moscow last year, I was introduced to a young man who told me he was studying Talmud in some yeshiva in that city. I asked, “What chapter?” He didn’t know. “What tractate?” He still didn’t know! “Well, what did you study this morning, what Mishnah rule?” He was not sure. I said, “Could it have been . . . ?” Ah, yes, that’s it!

But there are universities and then there are universities, and the same is so in the yeshiva world. While the alumni of the best of them exhibit certain intellectual deficiencies—they find it difficult

to construct a lucid, logical proposition and argument but are very good at low-brow exegesis of words and phrases—yeshiva-Orthodoxy does meet the expectation that a rabbi will base his teaching on the Torah. I have never heard of a rosh yeshiva (a professor) of a reputable yeshiva lacking substantial mastery of the texts, their theology, or law. And they live by the ideals of what they learn, or try to.

But in the pulpit-Orthodox rabbinate, that part of Orthodoxy that is integrationist and that chooses to address the world of Judaism, the situation hardly proves more promising than the Reform, Conservative, or Reconstructionist rabbinate. A kippah on the head of an Orthodox rabbi does not guarantee Torah inside. More to the point, while the Orthodox rabbinate knows things, it is rare that such rabbis can make a coherent and compelling case for the Torah, viewed as the source of culture and sensibility of the holy community of Israel, God’s people.

Writing in the *Jerusalem Report*, Ze’ev Chafets recently challenged the intellectuals of Judaism to answer a simple and reasonable question: “What’s it good for?” We in the academic humanities have to answer that question every day. Our students ask it, because we are not training them to get good-paying jobs when they graduate but educating them for a long life of the intellect. No one takes the question as effrontery or interprets it as an attack on the fields of philosophy, literature, history, or the academic study of religion. We answer that question not only by what we say but by what we do in the classroom every day. But responding to Chafets, Berel Wein, writing in the *Jerusalem Post* of October 29, 1999, saw his question as an attack on the Talmud. How does he respond to Chafets’ question?

It was and is the study of the Torah, above all else, that has preserved the Jewish people to this day. The impractical, uneconomical, otherworldly study of Torah is the main force that has kept the Jewish people alive, vibrant, creative, and stubborn to the core.

Alas—the argument from ethnicity once more! Rabbi Wein does not argue about the merits of what is studied, only about the results. But such an appeal to the practical consequence—the socially desirable result of keeping Jews Jewish—

surely validates studying many things, not just the Talmud. If Jewish education were devoted to the holocaust, or if it consisted of constant pilgrimages to the state of Israel, the same result might occur—or perhaps even a more satisfactory one, since an appeal to emotions (holocaustism) or the experience of ethnic loyalty (Israelism) demands much less than is required by an appeal to intellect. It is easier to feel than to think, and emotions always trump reason, except among the educated few. Rabbi Wein's incapacity to formulate a compelling answer out of the Torah for the value of studying the Torah exemplifies the intellectual limitations of integrationist Orthodoxy—the Orthodoxy that reads, in English, the *Jerusalem Post* and the *Jerusalem Report* and chooses to engage with the rest of Jewry.

With significant exceptions, in integrationist-Orthodoxy, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Jewish-Renewal/New Age Judaism, we find rabbis without Torah. That represents the failure of a generation of rabbinical seminary professors. The chain of tradition is as strong as its weakest link.

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Letter From South Africa

by Anthony P. Ellison

Out of Africa



On February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela walked out of prison and entered the last remaining European colony in Africa: South Africa.

From all sides and nations, the hope was that the 72-year-old Mandela, convicted and imprisoned 27 years before for treason, would bring down the edifice of apartheid and build, in its place, the new Jerusalem. With his gracious, old-fashioned courtesies, mild manner, and tempered pronouncements, he appeared eminently qualified to meet those expecta-

tations.

In espousing liberty, equality, and fraternity over tyranny, discrimination, and retribution, Nelson Mandela was to negotiate a place for South Africa in the modern world. Resentment at the injustices of white domination was to be eschewed. All of South Africa's people—the “rainbow people,” not a minority—were to be sovereign.

Mandela's story was irresistible to writers with a Manichaean outlook. One hagiography after another was delivered to a worldwide public starved for heroes. He was rapturously received everywhere in the Western hemisphere. He was awarded the Nobel Prize. Honorary doctorates fell on his shoulders like confetti; his name adorned streets, squares, and schools in every continent.

The skeptics were party poopers. Professor Donald Horowitz, a constitutional expert, was deemed unduly pessimistic when he judged democracy to be possible “but improbable in South Africa.” Margaret Thatcher, in the twilight of her reign, was rebuked for depicting the communists' utopia as “cloud cuckoo land.” Professor Walter Williams was being politically incorrect when he depicted the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) as kindred spirits, opposed to liberal individualism and hell-bent on the continuation of a disastrous collectivism. Joe Slovo, leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP), implicitly rejected Francis Fukuyama's thesis when he said that socialism, having failed everywhere else in the world, “shall be built correctly for the first time in South Africa.” There was outrage when Sir Laurens van der Post, who had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese, visited Mandela and declared that he appeared to have learned nothing “from the school of suffering.” And Prof. George Ayittey, an eloquent witness to Africa's post-colonial betrayal by its emerging elite, was met with incredulity when he counseled Mandela not to accept power.

The skepticism of these informed and perceptive observers was founded on what they knew about the liberation movement and on their observations of the parlous political and economic course Africa had run during the post-colonial period. The elite that came to power in post-apartheid South Africa comprised three groups. The smallest, and the most powerful, were the “exiles”—who, for the most part, had been

educated and acculturated not within South Africa but inside the Soviet bloc or under the strong influence of socialists and communists in Western institutions. A second group had captured the leadership of the trade unions. The third group consisted of assorted anti-apartheid activists ranging from religious leaders to Africanists.

These factions espoused philosophies that had in common an opposition to modernism and its potent transmitter, the competitive market process. Africanists called for a rediscovery of African history. The communists, although they had always been suspicious that the Africanists meant liberation to be enjoyed exclusively by blacks, were careful not to undercut the Africanist myth shaped around Mandela. Their intention was to conflate the Africanist with the socialist conception of liberation that was to spring from the radical transformation of South Africa.

Since 1990, the South African liberation movement has won a dazzling series of victories. It negotiated a political settlement with the white minority and wrote a constitution that serves its transformative goals; it has won two elections with overwhelming majorities; and it launched the transformation program which came to be known as the “national democratic revolution.” The election of 1999, however, was the movement's *coup de grace*, giving the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance the two-thirds majority which will enable it to proceed toward its one-party goal without having to answer either to an internal or to an external opposition. The constitutional protections of private property, minority rights, and the separation of powers can now be dismantled and the national democratic revolution realized.

These have been pyrrhic victories. Unemployment continues to rise. Accumulated job losses from 1989 to 1999 reached almost 850,000. There has been a marked increase in the emigration of skilled people from all racial groups. Some 20 percent of whites (who total 4.4 million of South Africa's 40.5 million persons) travel on a British passport. A study conducted by Trade and Industry Monitor, an independent research unit at the University of Cape Town, found that 233,609 South Africans had moved to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand between 1989 and 1997.

With the normalization of relation-

ships with other African countries has come an influx of immigrants from neighboring states like Mozambique, Lesotho, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are among the poorest on the planet. Most of the immigrants are destitute. Not surprisingly, there is rising xenophobia. All of South Africa's major cities, and most towns of any size, are now ringed by shanty towns where law enforcement is impossible. They are, in point of fact, truly ungovernable.

Thanks to corruption and incompetence, most provincial and municipal governments are bankrupt and inoperative. Much of Cape Town is terrorized by rival drug-peddling gangs fighting over turf. Downtown Johannesburg is rapidly becoming a wasteland. Residents of its once salubrious northern suburbs live on barricaded streets with armed patrols. Former guerrilla bands prey on banks and armored trucks, killing policemen and security personnel mercilessly in invariably successful raids.

All manner of individuals and factions pillage the commonweal. Yesterday's liberation heroes steal from their NGOs. CEOs raid the coffers, while employees steal what they can. Particularly worrying is the high number of policemen murdered—three per day. In 1999, more than 180 farmers were killed.

Rape has overtaken apartheid as the national curse. In his 1999 Booker Prize-winning novel *Disgrace*, J.M. Coetzee leaves the reader to decide whether the rapists are culpable individuals or the product of history. This is no mere abstraction, but a burning issue in a country in which it is estimated that a woman is raped every 26 seconds. And rape has become the more heinous because 22 percent of the population of South Africa, by the reckoning of the government, is HIV-positive.

In a six-hour valedictory speech to the ANC in December 1997, Mandela accused the media, "racist bureaucrats," and white political parties of impairing the transformation. Repudiating the notion of a multiracial, multiparty democracy, he appealed to all black parties to join the Alliance. Mandela identified the inherited order of apartheid as the cause of the rising disorder, corruption, and violence. As Patrick Bulger of the *Johannesburg Star* pointed out:

Mandela projected a view of society which holds that the ANC's project of transformation is the only

show in town; all else is counter-revolutionary. Either one is with the ANC, or one is against it; there is no middle ground.

Mandela's embrace of a one-party Africanist state shocked outside observers. He was not steering the transition but merely moving with the tide. Tragically, the ideologues of the Alliance are exercising the power of their one-party state by extending the reach of collectivization.

The dynamics are now clear. An exclusive polity and economy are propelling South Africa to an end state characterized by an homogenous premodern African society and a premodern economy. It remains to be seen whether the apartheid past will spur black South Africans to assume ultimate responsibility for their circumstances or be used as an excuse to shun them.

And what of Mandela? He deployed white communists to negotiate a dispensation that transferred power from the Afrikaners to the Africans and then "sold" this deal by behaving in an impartial manner for which he earned iconic status. He was, and is, an Africanist. The seeming contradictions in his behavior that have puzzled so many are a reflection not of the man but of Western projections. These have been invariably inappropriate because, for over a century, Westerners have been ruled not by their intellect but by their sentiments.

The liberal pro-Boers were right about the British Empire: It had no moral foundation. But they were wrong to idolize the Boers. Unlike the British, they formulated not a civic but a cultural and biological sense of nation. Loyalty was not to a set of evolved institutions but to a mystically conceived race, an emotive bond of blood. A seemingly unlikely alliance of Afrikaner farmers and white trade unionists, led by the communists, tamed capitalism's driving forces and channeled them in the interest of their alliance. An order of ascriptive stratification, coercively imposed and sanctified by a racist interpretation of sacred texts, secured the domination of the whites in general and the Afrikaners in particular.

The apartheid state was a collectivist, anti-modern project. The constituent elements in the victorious liberation movement also exhibited deep-seated revulsion against the modern world. Sharing these values, the ANC-SACP alliance offered South Africa a version of redistributive justice.

By rationalizing misappropriation and graft as retribution, socialism's redistributive justice has destroyed honest endeavor. By conceiving group justice to mean simply the ascendancy of Africans over their white colonizers, any semblance of moral authority has been surrendered, while at the same time the merit principle has been destroyed. The one-party state precludes the operation of a multiparty democracy. Diminishing political and economic freedoms reinforce the movement toward social unrest and economic stagnation.

Socialism has not been built correctly for the first time, as Slovo predicted it would. The communists have failed to conflate class with race, for race has proved to be a stronger bond than class or notions of nation. Freedom does not reside at the end of this particular struggle.

Gerald Kaufman described Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* as a millennium book, "because it takes us through the 20th century into a new century in which the source of power is shifting away from Western Europe." South Africa's 20th century started with a war between European peoples over mineral wealth; it is ending with their emigration. The trading arrangements of the European empires, with their resident colonies, have long since given way to what is now termed "globalization." Those who are able are taking their chance with this new order by emigrating. This is not the headlong rush of two million *piet noirs* out of Algeria in the summer of 1962. Rather, it is a steady strengthening and irreversible exodus that constitutes the last great trek of people of European heritage out of Africa.

Anthony P. Ellison lived in South Africa from 1990 to 1998.

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POLITICS

Christophobia

by Paul Gottfried

In the December 1999 issue of *Commentary*, Irving Stelzer took Peter Brimelow to task for wanting to restrict immigration. Setting the facts aside, Stelzer accuses Brimelow of being a fan of the "old-line WASP population" that had produced

perk-laden corpocrats who so mismanaged America's major companies as almost to bring the economy to ruin before being saved by Michael Milken and his gang of sons-of-immigrants corporate raiders.

Stelzer hopes his commentary will provide "Mr. Brimelow with enlightenment," but he suspects it will not:

I regret that I simply do not possess a torch powerful enough to brighten the darkness in which he finds himself as he contemplates the future of an America peopled by folks different from himself.

There was nothing in Brimelow's comments to justify such rhetorical violence; Stelzer's irrational response can only be explained as a reflection of his intense dislike of WASPs, whose diminishing presence in American life fills him with joy. Such sneering is characteristic of political intellectuals who have never had to deal with their own burden of prejudice—and, indeed, have worn it as a mark of moral superiority.

One main tendency in neoconservative bigotry is exemplified by *Commentary's* manufactured anti-Christianism. In the 1980's, when *Commentary's* Christophobia was blatant, the back pages (and, later, the front ones) abounded in accusations against Christianity. Representative of this obsession were such ill-conceived polemics as Henryk Grynberg's "Appropriating the Holocaust" (December 1982), Hyam Maccoby's "Christianity's Break with Judaism" (August 1984),

and Ruth R. Wisse's "Blaming Israel" (February 1984). In the first two pieces, the holocaust was made to fit into the Christian theological mainstream; Maccoby claimed a straight line ran from the "crucifixion myth" to Auschwitz. Most disconcerting was the repeated charge that the New Testament had contributed decisively to the destruction of European Jewry. This accusation flies in the face of the obvious fact that some of the most conspicuous Bible-reading Christian denominations have no record whatever of antisemitism. In Wisse's attacks on the critics of Israel's then right-wing government, she even argued that the (leftist) World Council of Churches sided with the Palestinians because of its Christian—and therefore necessarily antisemitic—character.

The mid-80's also saw a rash of articles published in *Commentary* by or on "Jewish writer" Cynthia Ozick. An author of decidedly middling talent, Ozick wrote lyrically nonetheless on the problem of Christian prejudice. She also suffered from a palpable perceptual difficulty, confusing American celebrations of Easter with the anti-Jewish riots that had plagued her ancestral Ukrainian village at the beginning of the 20th century.

An essay of mine, which appeared in the *Salisbury Review* in the mid-80's and pointed out these examples of bigotry, occasioned expressions of shock from traditional Christians. Though they claimed to read *Commentary* faithfully, all of this material had somehow escaped their notice—which is a bit like reading the *Spotlight* and not perceiving its opinions about a worldwide Jewish conspiracy.

Old habits die hard (and judging by the *New York Post's* strenuous attempts to egg on John McCain against the religious right, these particular habits may still be around), but by the late 80's, in any case, Norman Podhoretz and his successor, Neil Kozody, had stopped the overt Christian-bashing. One palpable reason is that "sensitive" Christian conservatives belabor this theme as much as the *Commentary* circle used to. With William F. Buckley making tortured searches for antisemitism and Cal Thomas repeatedly indicting the American people (most recently in his syndicated column of December 14) for "selling out Jews," why should Podhoretz and his friends bother with the same stuff? But

even more importantly, as Daniel Pipes explained in "American Muslims against American Jews" (*Commentary*, May 1998), American Jews may be wasting their time on "yesterday's problem," traditional Christians, when the more urgent concern is the growing Muslim population in the United States. In line with this perception, a strategic adjustment had taken place at *Commentary* headquarters. In order to rally its readers and the captive right to a struggle against anti-Zionist Muslims, *Commentary* is trying to make nice to "our Christian friends." In 1994, Midge Decter and Irving Kristol even scolded the ADL and its director for making false or exaggerated charges against the pro-Israeli Christian right.

But other neocon dislikes have not been concealed. Ethnic ill will has rushed in to fill the void created by the strategic absence of anti-Christian polemics. Several long articles in *Commentary* (cf. May 1988 and April 1997) by Donald Kagan compare Imperial Germany to both the Third Reich and Stalin's Russia. Lately Kagan—whose background is in ancient history—has pulled the Spartans in as additional heavies. Contrary to what might be gathered from Thucydides and Xenophon, Sparta is depicted as imperialistic as well as anti-democratic. Indeed, the descendants of the Dorians are turned into proto-Germans, in a bid for hegemony against proto-global democratic Athens.

Such jerry-built parallels bring to mind the popular German phrase that if a narrative seems congenial, *a dann geht's umso schlimmer für die Tatsachen* ("why worry about the facts?"). Were it not for the Nazis, nobody would bother with these selective comparisons. But why are they gaining currency right now?

Despite Arthur Schlesinger's stupid comparison in the late 40's of Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee with Hitler and Goering, the neocon dislike for unreconstructed Southern whites is probably unrelated to their anachronistic hatred of Germans. Southerners were overwhelmingly anglophile during both world wars and were disproportionately represented

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in the U.S. fighting forces. Neocon revulsion for them, as evidenced by the defamation of the late M.E. Bradford in the early 80's, may have been attributable, as Bradford himself noted, to "a sociological variable." Neocons considered Southerners to be obstinately rural gentiles, with a tendency toward antisemitic populist politics. And Southern resistance to the civil-rights movement (even before, as the neocons claim, the movement turned antisemitic) showed that Southerners had put themselves on the wrong side of Progress.

While it is *comme il faut* to praise the neocons for their argumentative skills and other strengths ascribed to their ethnic past, it is certainly more controversial to dwell on their baggage, which includes both the original and acquired attitudes of Eastern European Jews who settled at the turn of the century in predominantly Northern urban areas. Such feelings are not unusual, and something rather similar can be found among other ethnic minorities that nurse their own grudges. But neocon grudges are noteworthy for two reasons. First, those who express them come out of a deeply bookish culture and have tried to integrate them into a worldview, a practice that interwar European nationalists and some Southern intellectuals have also attempted to do with their prejudices. Moreover, the neocons have carried this practice to new heights. The Germans have been raised from a World War II problem to a sufficient cause of World War I and of the Franco-Prussian War, not to mention, in Allan Bloom's and Gertrude Himmelfarb's historical musings, the source of the counterculture that still poisons the United States. It is not enough for neoconservatives to express sympathy for the Union in the Civil War; they must also quote Harry Jaffa on the alleged resemblances between the antebellum South and the Third Reich and thereby conveniently link two *idées fixes*.

The second circumstance that makes neocon prejudice important is that what used to be primarily leftist obsessions have been imported by the neocons into the American right. Now that all conservative obstacles have been removed, these socialist prejudices have become general political biases, with little working against them. This has happened as the neocons have come to dominate the American conservative movement. They have done this not as interlopers (a comforting thought advanced by paleocon-

servatives back in the 80's), but at the invitation of fawning foundation heads and magazine publishers. (A useful comparison for this takeover would be the Austrian Anschluss.) Welcomed in, they imposed their followers, expelled those who resisted, and imprinted their hang-ups on what they reconstructed.

Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, and the author, most recently, of After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State (Princeton).

EDUCATION

Out of the Closet and Into the Schools

by Mark Tooley

Relying upon federal legislation intended to allow Bible clubs equal access in high schools, a student homosexual group is demanding not only meeting space but official approval at a Salt Lake City high school.

The Gay/Straight Alliance of East High School first formed in 1995. Fearing that federal law would preclude a ban targeting only homosexual groups, the Salt Lake City School Board decided to ban all non-curricular student organizations. Forty-six student groups, including the Frisbee Club, the Young Republicans, and Students Against Drunk Driving, were shut down in order to block the Gay/Straight Alliance.

Utah's state legislature responded to the Gay/Straight Alliance in 1996 with a law prohibiting public-school student groups that promote sexuality, bigotry, violence, or illegality. But another Utah law permits private groups to rent space in public buildings. With legal and financial assistance from a New York-based homosexual rights group, the Gay/Straight Alliance is now renting space at East High School. Most other banned student organizations, lacking similar outside help, remain shut down.

Meanwhile, with full backing from the American Civil Liberties Union and the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, homosexual high-school students, with their out-

of-the-closet faculty advisor, are waging a legal battle against the Salt Lake City School Board to procure free meeting space. Their campaign has even gained funding from the nation's largest organization for church women.

It is a bizarre situation involving sexuality, religion, free speech, parental rights, public education, and relationships among local, state, and federal governments. This story touches nearly every fault line in our nation's culture, making it the perfect emblem of America at the turn of the millennium. With even Mormon-dominated Utah vulnerable to the demands of sexual interest groups, the culture wars have clearly become a national phenomenon.

According to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in New York, there are at least 400 Gay/Straight Alliances meeting in high schools across the country. And their numbers are growing. Because local authorities in Salt Lake City have so far stood firm against GLSEN's demands, this case appears to have generated more publicity than most.

The Gay/Straight Alliance at East High School coalesced five years ago when some students recognized a teacher at the Utah Gay and Lesbian Community Center. Science teacher Camille Lee was there to hear a speech by gay-rights activist Candace Gingrich, sister to the former U.S. speaker of the house. Lee agreed to help six students start a club to discuss homosexual concerns.

Needing an ally, she asked the faculty advisor for the school's Socialist Club to join her in meeting with the principal. Lee also decided to announce her own lesbianism and become a member of GLSEN. The principal, Kay Petersen, was supportive of the proposed club. "Closets aren't healthy places," explained Petersen, who later received an award from GLSEN.

A worried Salt Lake City School Board disagreed. In early 1996, the board banned all non-curricular clubs from the city's schools. Its members feared a more specific ban would violate the federal Equal Access Act of 1983, which prohibits discrimination against a school group because of the unpopularity of its ideas. Conservative congressmen had created this legislation, with President Reagan's approval, to protect religious groups from discrimination.

Even without the school board's new policy, Utah's subsequently ratified pro-

hibition against student groups that promote sexuality would still have shut out the Gay/Straight Alliance. But the state's Civic Center Act of 1989 allows private groups to meet in public buildings. Student groups with adult sponsors and liability insurance are entitled to rent space, even if they lack official endorsement from the school's administration. The Gay/Straight Alliance gained the needed adult supervision and liability money from GLSEN. About 25 students now attend the weekly meetings.

Nearly all of the 45 other non-curriculum related groups—including the Computer Club, the Aztec Club for Latinos, the Black Club, the Ski Club, and the Polynesian Club—failed to find the sponsorship and funding required to continue and were disbanded. The Key Club, with sponsorship from the Kiwanis, was able to persevere. (Athletic teams were deemed curriculum-related and continue to meet, as do the National Honor Society and Future Business Leaders of America.)

Of course, members of the Gay/Straight Alliance and their sponsors, despite their rented meeting space, are still upset because they lack official sanction. In 1998, they filed a civil-rights suit against the Salt Lake City School Board.

"If we were school-sponsored, we could make announcements and get the word out to people in need of the support," explained one member of the Alliance to a reporter. Other students and faculty have complained that the absence of student organizations has undermined school spirit. Some even fret that colleges will snub them because they lack extracurricular activities on their school record.

In April of last year, the principal at East High School once again courted controversy by allowing the Gay/Straight Alliance to make a presentation about gay pride at a school assembly on multiculturalism, which all students were required to attend. Parents responded with outrage, and the principal admitted error. Future assemblies will only allow cultural groups identified with a specific ethnicity or geographic location.

Meanwhile, an award-winning—and sympathetic—documentary about the Gay/Straight Alliance's struggle against the Salt Lake City School Board was produced. *Out of the Past* was acclaimed at the Sundance Film Festival, aired at the White House's first celebration of Lesbian and Gay Pride month, and broadcast on PBS.

The Gay/Straight Alliance picked up crucial religious support when United

Methodist Women, the largest religious women's organization in the country (with nearly one million members), donated \$11,000 for a regional "Free School Clubs" meeting to generate support for overthrowing the Salt Lake City school policy. "We're not funding anything that is promoting sexual orientation," said Lois Dauway. Denying that the grant violates church policies that disapprove of homosexuality, she said her group was merely upholding free speech.

Some Methodists will no doubt wince at their denomination's alliance with the ACLU and the GLSEN, neither of which has been particularly friendly toward church groups. And the leaders of United Methodist Women probably have not contemplated their double standard: They have been silent when prayer or Bible groups have faced discrimination in public schools.

The hypocrisy of its allies aside, GLSEN is optimistic about the continued expansion of its network of students and teachers. GLSEN's creation in Boston in 1990 led Massachusetts to become the first state to recognize sexual minorities in public schools. Now there are over 140 homosexual student groups in Massachusetts schools.

The Gay/Straight Alliance of East

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High School is the only public school group of its kind in Utah so far, but GLSEN hopes a successful conclusion to its litigation later this year will allow other gay/straight groups to blossom throughout conservative Utah.

Mark Tooley is a research associate at the Institute on Religion and Democracy in Washington, D.C.

LANGUAGE

Abortion and the Murder of Meaning

by William Murchison

“Say what you mean,” the March Hare advised Alice—a piece of counsel imparted by writing teachers of the old school. But, as we know nowadays, say-what-you-mean is a lot of old-fashioned baloney. If we were to take it seriously, which of course we can’t (don’t forget “mad as a March Hare”), we’d never get anything done in politics or culture. People would see and, even worse, hear us. And that we just couldn’t have, particularly while trying to alter social priorities and conceptions.

The fungibility and plasticity of language has haunted stewards of Western thought for a long time—at least since George Orwell’s day, half a century ago. “Political language,” Orwell wrote in his famous essay, “Politics and the English Language,” “. . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” To this end, “political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.”

Welcome to the world of “choice” and “death with dignity,” a world in which a woman doesn’t abort a baby—instead, she drives to a women’s “clinic,” where a “health provider” “evacuates” the “product of conception.” To hear it, you would hardly know what goes on at these venues.

Except that you do know. Everyone these days knows. Our society has made a tacit covenant with death. It specifies that, provided Americans are not slapped in the face unnecessarily with graphic

language (“abortion,” “unborn baby,” etc.), they will say, and better still think, as little as possible about what happens when “health provider” meets “product of conception.”

“What you don’t know can’t hurt you,” goes the aphorism. This is where “sheer cloudy vagueness” comes in handy. Extinction of life? Doesn’t sound exactly like what would go on in a respectable “woman’s clinic.”

We have had much experience with euphemism and verbal delicacy, thanks partly to our Victorian ancestors, who are alleged to have had difficulties using the word “leg” in conjunction with chairs and pianos. (The worst tales of Victorian squeamishness strike me as improbable—inventions for the putting down of a people more notable than we are for dignity, industry, and propriety. When you see these tales borne by the same sort of folk who invent “Victorian” substitutes that serve their own purposes, you wonder all the more.)

Death does discombobulate. This human truth should be acknowledged, because it is ancient and characteristic. We don’t die, we succumb, pass away, pack it in, turn up our toes. Myrtle, you will understand, merely “lost” her husband; she didn’t tearfully watch him sink lower, day after day, until he finally died of prostate cancer. At worst, cancer “took,” not killed, him. This tendency to look the other way when Death barges through the unlocked door helps explain why funerals, over the past decade or so, have evolved into “celebrations of life,” with sentimental recollections, bad poetry, and, always, the “Ode to Joy.” We don’t like, in the funerary context, calling a spade a spade: perhaps remembering to what purpose such a tool is put once the mourners depart.

The modern era’s unease with theology makes it all the more susceptible to averted eyes at the gravesite. What if . . . what if . . . we don’t really . . .

All this explains only partly the modern proclivity to gloss over what happens in abortion clinics and will more and more, it seems, take place in hospitals and nursing homes, as the hopelessly ill “shuffle off this mortal coil,” with governmental permission. There is a bureaucratic instinct to say things in the most convoluted and uninformative fashion possible, but the bureaucratic instinct feeds off the political instinct. Bureaucrats work for politicians, do they not? Small wonder they should take their cues

from politicians, elected or academic.

Thus, when the bodies of 54 aborted babies were discovered a couple of years ago in San Bernadino County, California, the resultant autopsy report was, to say the least, absorbing. The coroner’s judgment: “Multiple containers with products of conception are consistent with products of artificial termination of pregnancies.”

Here is one to ponder. No dead babies—just products of conception, re-ordered in their earthly journeys by the artificial termination of pregnancy. A veritable shroud of words blocks the nearer inspection. Through the folds of the shroud, who can see arms, legs, faces? Ironically, the coroner’s report speaks explicitly of “facial features,” “upper extremities,” “internal organs,” and even an “empty stomach.” Let us get this straight now—“products of conception” have “facial features”? How human of them! Is it possible we are dealing here with humans?

Stop that talk! All you’ll achieve, going on so, is the sowing of confusion regarding a very central constitutional right. The right, not the exact forms in which it may be applied, is all that should detain us. “Ignore that man behind the curtain,” booms out a great voice. Sham and humbuggery, of dimensions unimagined by the Wizard of Oz, are our lot in the abortion debate—such as it is.

The sham does more than conceal; it distorts. When the upstate New York abortion “provider” Dr. Barnett Slepian was shot dead by a sniper, the *New York Times* limned him. Slepian had “attended to women who for medical or personal reasons could not carry an embryo to term.” The still-unapprehended sniper will likely find one day that St. Peter cottons no more to homicide than to abortion. Observe meanwhile the delicacy of the portrait here: “Caring Man”—according to the headline—killed for “attending to” women. Attending in what manner? The physicianly, of course. There were these embryos, and—stop right there.

Embryos are pre-fetal. The *Times* is implying that Dr. Slepian performed abortions only in the first trimester? Even if he did, that would violate the Judeo-Christian understanding of life and when it begins. In fact, Slepian was not known for observing this exceedingly fine distinction. He embraced, as he had to for logical consistency, the modern woman’s right to abort her unborn child

whenever she wanted to. (What makes a seven-month-old fetus worthier of salvation than a six-week-old embryo?) Yet here he is in the *Times*, whistling perhaps as he works, scrubbing out a few bits of embryonic tissue. Baby? What baby? No face, no fingers, no college prospects, no Social Security number around here.

Obviously the pro-Roe v. Wade regime that more or less dominates political life today likes things that way. But depictions such as the *New York Times*' enmesh us in lies, and lies, as Orwell understood, are corrosive, destroying the basis on which free citizens are able cooperatively to make policy for the common good.

If one side believes the other side to be populated almost uniquely by chisellers and liars, how good are the prospects for social peace? For peace of any kind? Ask Kenneth Starr, who must have posed to himself, over and over again, questions of this same import.

And so things stand, as the century and millennium end, with regard to what could be called *semanticide*—the murder of meaning. Murder with what end in view? Political advantage, mainly; power for its own sake, life and death no more than weapons in the quest.

The word "murder" tends to jar, given the degree to which the abortion controversy has desensitized us all. Even so, the word fits as neatly in the linguistic context as in any other. First-degree murder with malice, second-degree murder with mitigating circumstances, vehicular homicide—what's the practical difference? Meaning dies, sprawled on the pavement; journalists, politicians, and bureaucrats step gingerly around it. But Nature's abhorrence of vacuums is famous. So meaning is recreated—with such verbosity as it takes to rub out memories of the old meaning. Born (so to speak) are the "products of artificial termination of pregnancies." As "suicide" and "euthanasia" (the latter a word whose Greek origins fail to disguise its meaning) go by the boards, "death with dignity" makes its appearance. Death, yes, but with "dignity." Dignity makes it somehow all right: a kind of human victory over circumstance and suffering.

"Murder" or no murder, Orwell suggested the possibility that meaningful English could revive. In some sense, this is happening with regard to abortion. Take "partial-birth abortion," a wonderful condensation of complicated meaning that brings home to the hearer the

horror of what goes on in these procedures—brains suctioned out so as to collapse the skull, the corpse thereafter removed smoothly, efficiently.

"Cranial decompression," the semanticists call this method, in their typical obfuscatory way. No, it isn't—it's partial-birth abortion, and it kills young, living things. If too few Americans these days either care or dare to call a spade a spade, a spade nonetheless it remains. S-p-a-d-e.

William Murchison is a nationally syndicated columnist for the Dallas Morning News.

FILM

Presence, Real and Ersatz

by George McCartney

The Talented Mr. Ripley

Produced by Paramount Pictures
and Miramax Films

Directed by Anthony Minghella
Screenplay by Anthony Minghella,
from the novel by Patricia Highsmith
Released by Paramount Pictures

Anthony Minghella's screen version of Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* has beautiful photography, good acting, and real suspense. What it lacks is the element that would have made it an important film: Highsmith's vision. Minghella has replaced her cold-eyed nihilism with cautionary melodrama. In his hands, Highsmith's novel has become a tale of class envy coated with a patina of political rectitude. To the moral and theological issues Mr. Ripley poses, Minghella's film is tone deaf.

No surprise here, of course. Literary works of any sophistication rarely translate to the screen successfully. As a rule, the better the book, the poorer the film. Lesser novels, on the other hand, often improve in cinematic translation. Highsmith's own *Strangers on a Train* makes the point. Published in 1950, this was her first novel. As such, it is a remarkable performance, but certainly not first-class fiction. Then Alfred Hitchcock turned it

into a powerful film, a commercial and critical success that endures today. Although he changed Highsmith's plot and characters drastically, he grasped her intention and honored it fully. The result was a subtle Conradian narrative depicting a soul's tormented struggle between respectable ambition and amoral ruthlessness, a mortal combat between the proper self and its bedeviling double.

Highsmith's *Mr. Ripley*, published in 1955, is the first in what would become five novels featuring the eponymous character. A distinct advance upon *Strangers*, it is a novel of wit and complexity. As such, it poses a daunting challenge to the would-be screen adapter. Minghella either was not up to this challenge or deliberately evaded it.

Following Highsmith in general outline, Minghella invents new characters and incidents to smooth away the original's sharper edges. His narrative begins with a wealthy shipbuilder named Greenleaf, who desperately wants his feckless son, Dickie, to join him in the family business. But his heir apparent has other plans. Studiously ignoring the paternal call to duty, he remains on indefinite holiday in Naples, indulging his passions for jazz and sailing. When Greenleaf senior mistakes the well-groomed Tom Ripley for one of Dickie's classmates, he hires him to travel to Naples to convince the prodigal to return. Ripley, however, is not what he appears. He is a poor boy with little formal education and a desire to rise in the world at whatever cost, even—perhaps especially—the cost of his own identity. "I would rather be a fake somebody than a poor nobody," he remarks at one point.

Once set in motion, the film's plot gathers fateful momentum. In Naples, Ripley inveigles his way into Dickie's life, claiming to have admired him at a distance while they were both at Princeton. The two young men soon become friends while romping about Italy, supported by Greenleaf senior's largesse. But then Dickie notices some oddities. Disconcertingly, Ripley imitates his host's manner and handwriting. At the same time, he hasn't the marks of an Ivy League rich boy. He doesn't sail, ski, or womanize as Dickie and his friends do. His clothes are gauche, a fault compounded by his penchant for trying on Dickie's wardrobe. Then, in a motorboat off the coast of San Remo, Ripley confesses he has fallen in love with Dickie's way of life and proposes that they live to-

gether. Worse, Ripley's proposal hints that his love of Dickie's life may extend to his person, despite Dickie's involvement with a young woman named Marge. Dickie recoils in disgust, hurling an irrevocable insult: "You [are] a leech and it's boring." Ripley reacts impulsively, striking Dickie with an oar. In the furious fight that ensues, Ripley kills him unintentionally.

A talented forger and mimic, Ripley easily assumes Dickie's identity and funds so that he can live comfortably in Rome. His idyll is short-lived, however. As suspicions mount, he's forced to juggle both identities to avoid detection. After a series of grotesquely comic quick-changes, he is left at the conclusion in straits that are at once hideous and ambiguous.

The film tells its story entertainingly enough with a plot enlivened by several cleverly contrived twists and by performers who are all up to their tasks. As the envious and demented outsider, Matt Damon strikes just the right balance. Behind owlish black-rimmed glasses and an ungainly manner, he exudes watchful, reptilian cunning. Jude Law plays Dickie as one possessed of all the self-assurance and irresistible charm privilege can buy. He is arrogant and cruel golden youth incarnate, romancing Marge while carelessly impregnating a Neapolitan working-class girl. As Marge, Gwyneth Paltrow looks understandably wistful about her tenuous status in Dickie's mercurial affections.

Yet the film never rises above its melodramatics. Like René Clement's far duller adaptation of the same novel, *Purple Noon* (1960), it goes out of its way to furnish a supposedly "moral" ending, something Highsmith conspicuously (and correctly) eschewed. We're left with a fairly conventional murder story graced with a few portentously unorthodox flourishes. As a consequence, the film is haunted by an aura of so-whatness. Even if you haven't read Highsmith, you can't help feeling a bit cheated.

Minghella's departure from Highsmith is nowhere more evident than in the words his Ripley speaks at the film's opening: "If I could just go back and erase everything, including myself," he mutters remorsefully as he emerges from under a black screen that is being peeled away in diagonal strips. The ending returns to this moment. As we hear Ripley say these words once again, the black strips are replaced one by one, sealing

him in darkness. This visually clever framing device betrays Highsmith's conception. Such remorse is utterly foreign to her Ripley.

In the novel, Ripley is a conscienceless sociopath whose sense of authenticity has been erased long before the story begins. Ripley was orphaned in early childhood and raised grudgingly by a guardian aunt. As a consequence, he never developed a genuine self. By the time we meet him at age 25, he has become a moral and psychological cretin. Although he doesn't seem to realize it, he clearly despises himself. He displaces this self-hatred by detesting all that is conventionally normal. Although he conforms outwardly to social expectations, he harbors a sul-furious, if inchoate, cynicism. He enjoys fooling people with his normal appearance and cleverly mimics officialdom in order to gain leverage over others. After losing a job at the Internal Revenue Service, he uses the agency's letterhead to dun people on false charges of tax underpayment. He preys upon their guilt, shrewdly assuming that few Americans are entirely honest when filing their returns. Although he cannot cash the checks they anxiously send him, he takes pleasure in proving that no one is as straight as he pretends. It's as though he needs to demonstrate to himself that official society is as much a fraud as he is.

What Ripley doesn't realize is that his little ruse weirdly parodies the practice of his miserly aunt. She sends him checks at irregular intervals, made out in odd amounts—\$12.95, \$6.48—much like the larger amounts—\$119.54, \$233.76—he puts down on his bogus bills. He compensates for his aunt's niggardly support by getting others to pitch in more generously, at least on paper.

Ripley is a wounded narcissist who thinks he is entitled to have all the world nurture and indulge him. At the same time, his narcissism isolates him from others. This is, in part, why he is so profoundly confused about his sexuality. He is attracted to a young lady with whom he shares a taste in art precisely because she doesn't expect him to make a pass at her. He socializes with a young man who works as a window dresser but is repelled by homosexual advances. At bottom, he is hopelessly trapped in his own self-embrace. Although he wants to escape, he is prevented by his inability to understand either himself or others.

All of this comes into focus when Highsmith's Ripley, unlike Minghella's,

deliberately decides to murder Dickie. His violence is triggered as much by the look in Dickie's eyes as by his insult. In Highsmith's words, Dickie's eyes are:

shining and empty, nothing but little pieces of blue jelly with a black dot in them, meaningless, without relation to him. You were supposed to see the soul through the eyes, to see love through the eyes, the one place you could look at another human being and see what really went on inside, and in Dickie's eyes Tom saw nothing more now than he would have seen if he had looked at the hard, bloodless surface of a mirror. . . . It struck Tom like a horrible truth, true for all time, true for the people he had known in the past and for those he would know in the future: each had stood and would stand before him, and he would know time and time again that he would never know them, and the worst was that there would always be the illusion, for a time, that he did know them, and that he and they were completely in harmony and alike. For an instant the wordless shock of his realization seemed more than he could bear. . . . He felt surrounded by strangeness, by hostility.

This is nothing less than a description of Hell. Ripley's warped self is locked in its own stygian chamber. Some commentators have made Ripley a martyr to misunderstood homosexuality, a man suffering for his difference in the context of the intolerant 50's and therefore driven to pathological extremes. As evidence, they adduce Highsmith's admission of her own youthful bisexuality and her pseudonymously published lesbian novel, *The Price of Salt*. No doubt her proclivities and her reportedly horrendous upbringing colored her fiction. (Her mother informed her that she had tried to abort her by drinking turpentine, jocularly observing that this might explain why Highsmith liked its aroma as a child.) Nevertheless, Ripley cannot be explained so reductively. Highsmith's Marge comes much closer to the truth when she implores Dickie to drop him. "He may not be queer. He's just a nothing, which is worse. He isn't normal enough to have any kind of sex life, if you know what I mean."

Other than his aunt's endless re-

minders of how intolerable a financial drain he was, we never learn what happened to Ripley as a child, leaving him an emotional amputee. When accused of being queer, he doesn't understand. He childishly thinks of himself as "one of the most innocent and clean-minded [people] he [has] ever known." But contrary to his imagined sexual innocence, his murder of Dickie has an unmistakably sexual cast. When Dickie is removing his trousers to go swimming, Ripley "pick[s] up the oar, as casually as if he were playing with it between his knees," and then attacks him.

The murder is Ripley's horribly self-aborting attempt to make contact with another. Committing it, he gains the illusion of escaping his claustrophobically self-centered existence. Since he is unable to form a relationship with Dickie, he appropriates Dickie's identity instead. "This was the clean slate. . . . This was the real annihilation of his past and of himself, Tom Ripley, who was made up of that past, and his rebirth as a completely new person." A few days later, walking the streets of Paris in the guise of Dickie Greenleaf, he is enchanted to hear Christmas carols being sung in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Afterward, at a bar-tabac, he orders hot milk that is "almost tasteless, pure and chastening, as [he] imagined a wafer tasted in church." This parody of transubstantiation may seem peculiarly blasphemous given its murderous context, but it is nonetheless entirely apt. Ripley sacrifices Dickie in order to redeem himself under the other man's guise. Instead of salvation through the Real Presence, he effects a ghoulish and transient deliverance from his private hell by means of an ersatz presence in and through Dickie, the Christ of wealth and position. On the emptiness of Ripley's achievement, Highsmith is unequivocal. His salvation is wholly and corruptibly material, as his fanatic devotion to Dickie's possessions makes perfectly clear. "The cufflinks, the white silk shirts, . . . the old brown grain-leather shoes, the kind advertised in *Punch* as lasting a life-time, they were all his and he loved them all." Rarely has the word love been used so chillingly. Later, we're told that "possessions reminded him that he existed, and made him enjoy his existence. . . . And wasn't that worth something? He existed."

Self-invention achieved at the expense of others and sustained by means of possessions—is this not a portrait of salvation

in our materialist culture? Ironically, mad Ripley actually does become Dickie after all—a selfish, upper-class snob, brutally using others for his own pleasure and convenience.

Only at the novel's conclusion do we realize we've been reading a Jekyll-and-Hyde story told solely through Hyde's point of view. Ripley fascinates us because, in his visage, we catch a glimpse of our own gnarled self-absorption as though reflected in "the hard, bloodless surface of a mirror."

Minghella leaves all of this out of his film. Why? In an interview with the *New York Times*, he alludes to concerns that were raised during the film's preparation. Journalists had asked him how he planned to deal with the homosexual content. Did Minghella cave in and deliberately soften Ripley's character? Does this explain his addition of a highly sympathetic homosexual character? If so, score another perverse victory for political correctness and mourn the loss of what could have been a morally complex film, one that, like its source, would have challenged our preconceptions of who and what we are.

George McCartney teaches English at St. John's University.

MUSIC

Randy Newman's American Dream

by Brian Doherty

When Randy Newman played the Kennedy Center in Washington last March, it was perfectly appropriate, on one level: No contemporary pop singer has serenaded America as far and as wide as Newman. He's written songs about Birmingham, Louisiana, Baltimore, Dayton, Los Angeles, Gainesville, Kentucky, Miami, the Cuyahoga River, New Orleans. His appearance in a government-sanctioned performing space is somewhat perverse, though, since Newman is an ambiguous writer who uses vicious humor to make serious points; who laughs at his characters while also laughing at the people who laugh; who gives

American places and people more specific attention than any other rock songwriter, yet frequently makes our lives seem sad and hysterical in equal degrees. Newman's Kennedy Center gig serenaded a part of America that few Washingtonians would willingly embrace.

On a double-bill with a fellow veteran of the late 70's novelty hit parade, K.C. and the Sunshine Band, Newman chose to debut for the nostalgia-hungry crowd two songs from his latest CD, *Bad Love*. In "The Great Nations of Europe," the United States is not explicitly mentioned, and the melody is light, bouncing, charming, filled with amusing rhymes and musical puns (missing in Newman's piano-only live show) such as Yankee-Doodle-Dandy military drumming and horn flourishes. But the song casts a strange shadow on us, like seeing glimmers of a great-grandchild's sly look in a faded old daguerrotype of his Civil War forebear. It describes a relentless litany of crimes and destruction, of the annihilation of whole peoples before the violence and disease spread by European ambitions for the New World.

Newman's most destructively and bluntly funny song, "Political Science," is certainly a child of (or parody of—a meaningless distinction in Newman's writing) American Exceptionalism. Newman imagines dropping atomic bombs on all the nations that are ungrateful for all the wonderful things America has done, or tried to do, for them. "They all hate us anyhow," he observes, "so let's drop the big one now."

This is one of his more obvious knee-slappers, and yet some variant of this feeling is almost certainly behind many Americans' relatively sanguine acceptance of NATO destruction and slaughter in the former Yugoslavia. Like most of Newman's songs, it's funny but true: Exceptionalism can turn with frightening swiftness into the belief that anyone who doesn't see everything our way is worthy of destruction. "Boom goes London / Boom Paree / More room for you / More room for me."

Through Newman's work, a history of America can be traced. It is not a triumphal history—but neither is it a Howard Zinn-ish bill of indictment. Newman's implied assaults are always double-edged. In his most famous song, the 1978 number-two hit "Short People," he bludgeons us with both stupid bigotry (the verses—"Short People got no reason to live") and ridiculously sententious

Pollyanna crooning (courtesy of the Eagles—as befits a song-and-dance man, he’s learned to make the sound signify and entertain as much as the words): “Short people are just the same as you and I / A fool such as I / All men are brothers until the day they die / What a wonderful world.” What any sensitive listener is left with is pure discomfort—the knee-jerk, anti-bigotry reaction seems as foolish as the bigotry, and the bigotry, so gleefully expressed, seems almost, well, fun. Newman doesn’t usually give listeners an easy way out. Laughing at a Newman song is more of a self-implication than a jolly relief—whenever he appears to be mocking the character he’s singing as, he is also mocking the type of person who would mock that type of person, as well as the listener who laughs along.

His song cycle about the American South, *Good Old Boys*, is perhaps the best example of this. Newman spent some formative childhood years in New Orleans; in his misty autobiographical nostalgia number, “New Orleans Wins the War,” he remembers the party-hearty poltroons of that lovable city not realizing World War II was over until 1948—and then thinking that the victory was over the Yankees. His father realizes he’s got to get the kid out of there:

People have fun here
I think that they should
But nobody from here ever comes
to no good
They’re gonna pickle him in
brandy
I tell him that he’s saved
Throw firecrackers ’round his
grave.

Thus Newman grew up in Los Angeles, but his vocal style is a Southern blues drawl. He’s got the South in his blood.

Good Old Boys can be heard as a ringing indictment of Southern foolishness—as most of Newman’s liberal rock critic fans hear it. But as the emblematic opening number, “Rednecks,” demonstrates, Newman’s humor isn’t at the expense of the low-status, unappreciated people in whose voice he so often speaks. The song’s chorus—“We’re rednecks / We don’t know our a - - from a hole in the ground / We’re rednecks / Kcep’in’ the niggers down”—seems like an overly obvious attack on the stupidity of rednecks. But it’s really about the attitude of Northern sophisticates toward rednecks, since the opening verse establishes that the

song is written by a Southerner angry when he sees a “smart-a - - New York Jew” (give or take a major metropolis, that’s Newman himself) making fun of Lester Maddox on TV. The narrator goes on to lay out all the typical Northern intellectual complaints about the South, mixing with them some of his own blunt assaults on the racial troubles of the North while listing all of its strife-filled ghettos.

The rest of the album is similarly scabrous toward the patronizing hand of Northern sympathy for benighted, troubled, dirt-poor Southerners. *Good Old Boys* mostly presents scenes and characters from Southern life that, while sometimes hilarious, show people trying to maintain dignity and individuality in the face of a world full of powerful, successful, influential people from far away who “place themselves high above us.”

The most vivid description of the numb indifference of the professional helper toward the helped is found in “Louisiana 1927,” a song about a tragic flood which causes the Southern narrator to darkly suspect that “They’re trying to wash us away.” Here’s how he regards Northern benevolence: “President Coolidge come down in a railroad train / With a little fat man with a notepad in his hand / The president say, ‘Little fat man isn’t it a shame what the river had done to this poor crackers’ land.’” The real sympathy in Newman’s *Good Old Boys* is for unsophisticated Southerners who don’t believe that the movers and shakers of the world are really any better than they. As the narrator of “Rednecks” says of the “smart-a - - New York Jew,” “If he thinks he’s better than us, he’s wrong.” A childish truism, perhaps, but also the basis of all civilized politics.

A similar thread of understanding can be traced through all of Newman’s songs about low-status freaks, ignorant bigots, drunken do-nothings, small-time grifters. As a cosmopolitan liberal Jewish writer from Los Angeles, Newman is almost a traitor to his class. But he’s a clever one, because his songs are almost all deeply ironic—they are not speaking his truths, but the truths of his subjects.

Such irony has undoubtedly hurt Newman’s career. As he once lamented in a *Playboy* interview, people don’t like to work for their entertainment. Newman cares about these things. He is, and loves being, a popular entertainer, and despite his one-time hit, he likes to complain about not selling enough records.

As Newman’s pop song output dwindles (in the past 17 years, he’s only recorded three regular LPs), like a good American hustler, he is eagerly trying out new entrepreneurial configurations, from show-tune writer (for the way-off-Broadway play *Faust*) to composer and songwriter for kids movies (*Toy Story*, *Antz*). Film music is a family tradition: His uncle Alfred composed the 20th Century Fox theme, plus dozens of movie scores.

The simultaneous tawdriness and charm of typical American entertainment has been a perennial Newman theme, and he ties it in with what could be seen as his one grand theme, the key that explains how this smart Hollywood liberal can speak with such understanding about a panoply of American life so different from his own experience: the American romance with the Other. That’s what entertainment is all about, Newman seems to suggest, in his songs about old-fashioned traveling freak shows such as “Simon Smith and the Amazing Dancing Bear,” set to a gently bouncing music hall melody, or the painfully sad and hilarious “Davy the Fat Boy” (“I think we can persuade him to do / The famous Fat Boy Dance for you”) or *Bad Love*’s opening track, “My Country,” a stately, lilting tune about how American families bond, or don’t, over television. This fascination with the Other streams through Newman’s American history, beginning when the first Europeans caused the death of the first American native. It influenced the events that filled the West and made the dream factories which make us want to watch Davy the Fat Boy, and to reach out to other lands—and bomb them when we feel rebuffed. With television, this fascination with the Other has been domesticated and broadcast to us in the comfort, or discomfort, of our own home.

Randy Newman loves it, he hates it, he laughs at it, and perhaps, sometimes, even sheds the tears of a clown. At his best, which he reaches a respectable percentage of the time, he’s both funnier and more empathetic than his reputation as a sneering Tom Lehreresque piano pounder would suggest. “This is my country, these are my people,” he keens proudly on *Bad Love*, “and I know ’em like the back of my own hand.”

Brian Doherty is the Warren Brookes Fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

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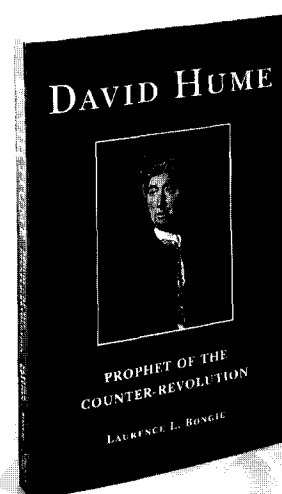
Prophet of the Counter-revolution

Second Edition

By Laurence L. Bongie

Foreword by Donald Livingston

Though usually Edmund Burke is identified as the first to articulate the principles of a modern conservative political tradition, arguably he was preceded by a Scotsman who is better known for espousing a brilliant concept of skepticism. As Laurence Bongie notes, "David Hume was undoubtedly the eighteenth-century British writer whose works were most widely known and acclaimed on the Continent during the later Enlightenment period. Hume's impact [in France] was of undeniable importance, greater even for a time than the related influence of Burke, although it represents a contribution to French counter-revolutionary thought which, unlike that of Burke, has been almost totally ignored by historians to this day." The bulk of Bongie's work consists of the writings of French readers of Hume who were confronted, first, by the ideology of human perfection and, finally, by the actual terrors of the French Revolution. Offered in French in the original edition of *David Hume* published by Oxford University Press in 1965, these vitally important writings have been translated by the author into English for the Liberty Fund second edition. In his foreword, Donald Livingston observes that "If conservatism is taken to be an intellectual critique of the first attempt at modern total revolution, then the first such event was not the French but the Puritan revolution, and the first systematic critique of this sort of act was given by Hume."



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